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ABSTRACT

This volume, one of a series of handbooks on foreign culture, is intended as a reference tool for military and other personnel requiring an objective, comprehensive, and balanced description of the Indian Ocean Territories, namely, the two republics of Meldives and Mauritius, and the two European dependencies of Seychelles and Reunion. An analytical appraisal of social, economic, and political aspects is provided with emphasis on the interaction of these societal elements in an attempt to convey to the reader an understanding of the country and the people of the area who widely differ in ethnic backgrounds and from one territory to another. The handbook provides a description of not only the physical characteristics of the territories but also of changes that are expected to occur. Since none of the territories are economically self-sufficient, the need for economic diversification and development is a recurring theme. Other information about the territories includes historical background, physical environment, population and labor force, ethnic groups, languages, religion, culture and security. Additional features are an area summary and a bibliography. Related documents are: SO 002 053 through SO 002 058, SO 002 428, and SO 002 249. (Author/SJM)

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AREA HANDBOOK
for
THE INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES

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FOREWORD

This volume is one of a series of handbooks prepared under the auspices of Foreign Area Studies (FAS) of The American University, designed to be useful to military and other personnel who need a convenient compilation of basic facts about the social, economic, political and military institutions and practices of various countries. The emphasis is on objective description of the nation's present society and the kinds of possible or probable changes that might be expected in the future. The handbook seeks to present as full and as balanced an integrated exposition as limitations on space and research time permit. It was compiled from information available in openly published material. Extensive bibliographies are provided to permit recourse to other published sources for more detailed information. There has been no attempt to express any specific point of view or to make policy recommendations. The contents of the handbook represent the work of the authors and FAS and do not represent the official view of the United States Government.

An effort has been made to make the handbook as comprehensive as possible. It can be expected, however, that the material, interpretations, and conclusions are subject to modification in the light of new information and developments. Such corrections, additions, and suggestions for factual, interpretative, or other change as readers may have will be welcomed for use in future revisions. Comments may be addressed to:

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PREFACE

The gradual withdrawal of British forces from southern Asia beginning in the late 1960s, and the simultaneous appearance of Soviet naval forces in the same region have focused world attention on the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean area. Among the enduring features of the area are the widely scattered island groups that have served as bases for British and French forces from the early days of the colonial era. Two of the island territories recently have become independent republics, and political pressures for more autonomy are being felt elsewhere. None of the territories is economically self-sufficient, however, and the need for economic diversification and development is a recurring theme.

Throughout the area people of widely different ethnic backgrounds have been brought together, and they have formed societies that differ substantially from one territory to another. The social, political, and economic factors affecting their lives are described here to the extent that published information permits.

This handbook has been written for The American University by individual contributors under the direction of the Institute for Cross-Cultural Research. The maps were drawn by Frank and Clare Ford, and the Index was compiled by Anne L. Carr. A Glossary also has been compiled for the convenience of the reader.

AREA SUMMARY

1. POLITICAL UNITS: The area includes two independent states and two European dependencies. The Republic of Maldives became independent in 1965, and Mauritius became an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1968. Parts of Seychelles, a British Crown Colony, including the Aldabra Islands, the Farquhar Islands, the island of Desroches in the Amirante group, and the Chagos Archipelago (formerly a dependency of Mauritius) were joined administratively in 1965 to form a new colony called the British Indian Ocean Territory. The territory is administered by the Governor of Seychelles. The island of Réunion (sometimes La Réunion; formerly Bourbon) has been an overseas department of France since 1946.

2. GOVERNMENTS: The Republic of Maldives is governed by a President who is elected by a unicameral legislature which is elected by popular vote. The President's election is confirmed by popular referendum. Mauritius has a unicameral system of parliamentary government headed by a Prime Minister who is appointed by a Governor-General representing Queen Elizabeth II. The Prime Minister is assisted by a Council of Ministers. He is the leader of the majority party in the legislature which is elected by universal suffrage. The Colony of Seychelles is governed by an elected Governing Council which combines legislative and executive functions. A Governor appointed by Queen Elizabeth also serves as Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The French Overseas Department of Réunion is administered by a Prefect who is appointed by the central government's Minister of the Interior. The island elects three Deputies and two Senators to the French National Assembly. It also elects a local representative assembly, called the General Council, a President of the Council, and other municipal councils.

3. CONSTITUTIONS: The Maldives constitution was promulgated in 1964 and modified in 1968. The Mauritius constitution was promulgated in 1967 and amended in 1969. A new constitution for Seychelles was approved in the 1970 elections. Réunion abides by the French constitution of the Fifth Republic which came into force in 1958.

4. POPULATIONS: *Maldives.* 107,000 persons, derived primarily

from India and Ceylon, with some Arab and Negro admixture. Emigration is negligible. *Seychelles.* 51,000 persons (1969), primarily Creole (Africans mixed with Europeans), Africans, Indians, and Europeans. *Mauritius.* 810,000 persons (1968), Indo-Mauritians, 60 percent; Sino-Mauritians, 3 percent; mixed African-European and others, 37 percent. Rate of emigration is about 4.5 per thousand per year. *Réunion.* 426,000 persons (1969), primarily Creole (Africans mixed with Europeans), Hindu Indians, Muslim Indians, Chinese, and Europeans. Emigration rate is about six percent per year.

5. GEOGRAPHY: *Maldives.* About 215 small, flat, low, coral islands distributed over a 500 mile long archipelago have a total area of about 100 square miles. *Seychelles.* Thirty-two granitic (high) islands and sixty to seventy coralline (low) islands with a cumulative area of about 100 square miles. *Mauritius.* The island consists of a broad plateau with several low mountain groups. It is surrounded by a coral reef and covers 720 square miles. *Réunion.* The 969 square mile island has a narrow coastal plain surrounding a central mountainous massif which is divided by a high plateau.

6. LANGUAGES: *Maldives.* The national language is Male, which is related to Sinhalese of Ceylon. *Seychelles.* English is the official language, French is the most prestigious one, and Creole is the most common. *Mauritius.* English is the official language. Creole, French, Hindi, Urdu, and other Indian languages also are spoken. *Réunion.* French is the official language. Creole, Tamil (Indian), and Gujarati (Indian) also are widely spoken.

7. RELIGIONS: *Maldives.* Islam is the state religion. There is a small Hindu minority. *Seychelles.* Ninety percent Roman Catholic, eight percent Church of England, and the remainder is Hindu or Muslim. *Mauritius.* Forty percent Hindu, thirty percent Christian, fourteen percent Muslim, and the remainder is Buddhist, Taoist, and other faiths. *Réunion.* Ninety-four percent Roman Catholic, and the remainder is Hindu or Muslim.

8. EDUCATION: *Maldives.* In 1964 there were 162 modern primary schools and one modern secondary school. Advanced education is obtained in Ceylon and elsewhere abroad. *Seychelles.* Seventy to eighty percent of the population is literate. There are many church-supported primary and secondary schools. There are also vocational and teacher training institutions. Other advanced education is obtained abroad. *Mauritius.* Literacy is nearly universal. In 1967 there were 330 primary schools, 137 secondary schools, and one university. *Réunion.* Education is compulsory to age 16. There are 350 primary schools, three secondary schools, and a teacher training college.

9. HEALTH: *Maldives.* Serious health problems include a local variety of non-fatal malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, poliomyelitis, and parasites. *Seychelles.* The major health problems are tuberculosis, venereal diseases, and intestinal parasites. *Mauritius.* Malnutrition, malaria, and parasites are the major health problems. *Réunion.* Malnutrition, tuberculosis, alcoholism, and parasites are the most serious health problems.

10. CLIMATE: Throughout the area the climate is warm and humid. Mauritius and Réunion are subject to occasional cyclonic storms (typhoons), and the Maldives are in the monsoon region.

11. JUSTICE: *Maldives.* The basic law is Islamic, derived from the Qur'an. *Seychelles.* Criminal law is British; civil and commercial law is French. *Mauritius.* Civil, penal, and commercial law is French; Company Law, Law of Evidence, and Law of Criminal Procedure is English. *Réunion.* Metropolitan French law prevails.

12. ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS: *Maldives.* There are 19 administrative districts corresponding to the 19 atoll groups. *Seychelles.* Local government was abolished in 1968 and administrative responsibility was assumed by the Governing Council, *Mauritius.* There are nine local administrative divisions. *Réunion.* Has two arondissements.

13. ECONOMY: *Maldives.* Fishing and fish processing dominate the economy. There is some light industry for processing coconut fiber (coir). *Seychelles.* A single-crop economy devoted to coconut cultivation and processing. *Mauritius.* A single-crop economy devoted to the cultivation and processing of sugar. *Réunion.* Production of sugar, rum, and perfume oils dominates the economy.

14. EXPORTS: *Maldives.* Maldive fish comprises 90 percent of all exports which are traded with Ceylon. *Seychelles.* Copra and cinnamon are sold primarily to India. *Mauritius.* Sugar, rum, and molasses are bought primarily by the United Kingdom. *Réunion.* Sugar, rum, and perfume are sold to France.

15. IMPORTS: *Maldives.* Primarily rice, from Ceylon. *Seychelles.* Rice is the major import, from Burma. *Mauritius.* Buys rice from Burma and other goods from the United Kingdom, Japan, India, and Hong Kong. *Réunion.* Food and industrial products are imported from France and Madagascar.

16. CURRENCY: *Maldives.* Maldivian rupee, 1 MR = U.S. $0.17. *Seychelles.* Seychelles rupee, 1 SR = U.S. $0.18. *Mauritius.* Mauritius rupee, 1 MR = U.S. $0.18. *Réunion.* Franc CFA, 1 Franc CFA = U.S. $0.0036.

17. COMMUNICATIONS: *Maldives.* No telephones, one radio station, no television. *Seychelles.* 578 telephones, 10,000 radio receivers, one broadcasting station, no television. *Mauritius.* 16,000 telephones, 77,000 radio receivers, 14,000 television receivers, one radio-television station. *Réunion.* 11,000 telephones, 54,000 radios, 14,000 television sets, one radio-television station.

18. RAILROADS: A railroad system on Mauritius has been discontinued.

19. ROADS: *Maldives.* Coral sand streets. *Seychelles.* On Mahé there are 75 miles of roads, 55 miles of which are asphalt. On Praslin there are 20 miles of roads, four of which are asphalt. *Mauritius.* A well-developed system of 823 miles of roads, eighty percent asphalted. *Réunion.* There are 1,300 miles of roads, 850 miles are asphalted.

20. PORTS: *Maldives.* Male is a free port. *Seychelles.* Victoria, the capital on Mahé, is the principal port. *Mauritius.* Port Louis is the principal port. *Réunion.* Le Port at Pointe-des-Galets is the port.

21. AIRFIELDS AND AIRLINES: *Maldives.* There is a small field on the island of Hulele, near Male, and a British military field on Gan island at the southern end of the archipelago. Air Ceylon provides occasional service to Hulele. *Seychelles.* A new field big enough for international jets is to be opened in 1971. *Mauritius.* Plaisance airfield serves international airlines including BOAC, Qantas, South African Airways, East African Airways, and Air India. There is no internal service. *Réunion.* Gillot airfield provides international service for Air France and Air Madagascar.

22. MERCHANT MARINE: There is virtually no merchant marine under local registry.

23. INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS: *Maldives.* Has no defense agreements but has agreed to allow Great Britain to use the Gan island facilities for a military staging area until 1986. *Mauritius.* Has a joint defense agreement with Great Britain for assistance against any threats to its internal security.

24. AID PROGRAMS AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: *Maldives.* Has received grants from Great Britain and Ceylon. *Mauritius.* In addition to Commonwealth assistance, Mauritius receives aid from the United States Food for Peace (P.L. 480) and Peace Corps programs.

25. OVERSEAS TERRITORIES AND POSSESSIONS: Seychelles administers the British Indian Ocean Territory. Mauritius has three dependencies: Rodrigues, the Agalega Islands, and Cargados Carajos islands.

26. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS: *Maldives.* United Nations and its specialized agencies, the World Health Organization, and the International Monetary Fund; and the Colombo Plan. The Maldives declined membership in the British Comonwealth. *Mauritius.* The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and the Common Organization of African and Malagasy States and Mauritius.

27. ARMED FORCES: *Maldives.* A five hundred man police force and a coastal patrol force. *Seychelles.* In 1968 the police force had about 340 men. *Mauritius.* A force of about 1,800 police existed in 1969. *Réunion.* Assumed to have police protection appropriate to a department of France.

THE INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES

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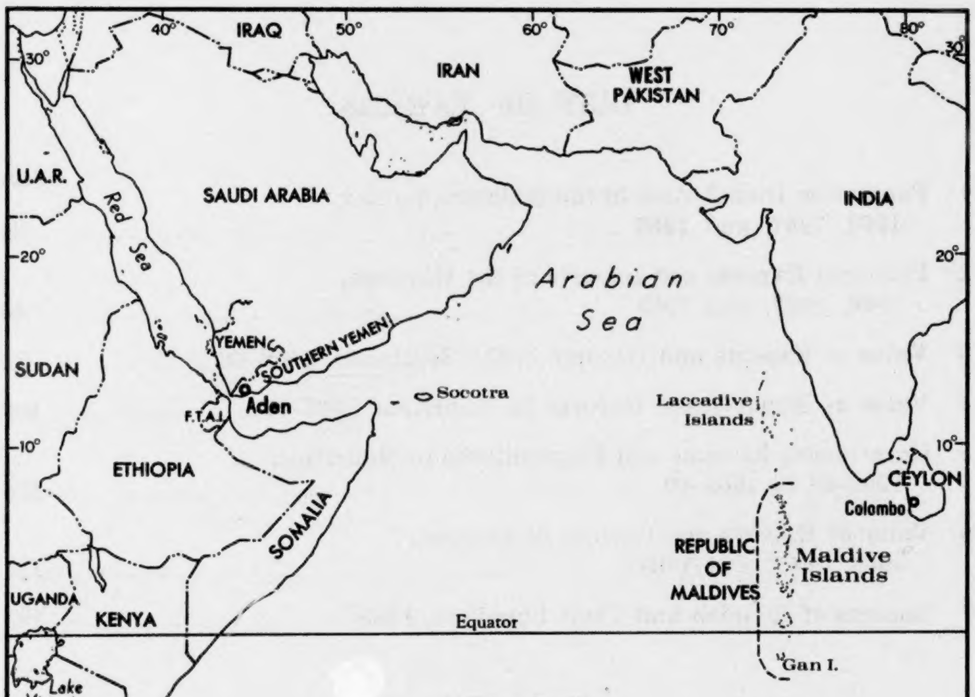
IRAQ
IRAN
WEST PAKISTAN
INDIA
U.A.R.
Red Sea
SAUDI ARABIA
Arabian Sea
YEMEN
SOUTHERN YEMEN
SUDAN
Socotra
Laccadive Islands
F.T.A.I.
Aden
ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
CEYLON
Colombo
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES
Maldive Islands
UGANDA
KENYA
Equator
Gan I.
Lake Victoria
Seychelles
Amirantes Is.
Desroches I.
Chagos Archipelago
TANZANIA
British Indian Ocean Territory
Aldabra Is.
Comoro Is.
Farquhar Is.
Agalega Is.
MALAWI
MOZAMBIQUE
Mozambique Channel
MAURITIUS
Indian
Madagascar
MALAGASY REPUBLIC
Rodrigues
Mauritius I.
Réunion I.
Tropic of Capricorn
Ocean
0 500 1,000 1,500
Kilometers
0 500 1,000 1,500
Miles
30°
20°
10°
40°
40°
50°
60°
70°
80°

Figure 1. Western Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE REGION

East of Africa and south of Asia the Indian Ocean—the third largest sea in the world—covers more than twenty-eight million square miles. A great ridge of underwater mountains extends southward from the Indian subcontinent and divides the ocean into eastern and western basins. Five islands or territories in the western basin—the Maldives, Seychelles, British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), Mauritius, and Réunion—are the subjects of this handbook (see fig 1). Four other island territories in the same basin—Madagascar (Malagasy Republic). Zanzibar (part of Tanzania), the Comoros, and the Laccadives—are not within its scope.

The vastness of the Indian Ocean is shown by the long distances between points around its shores. From Capetown to Singapore, for example, the distance is 5,579 nautical miles; from Aden to Australia it is 5,187 nautical miles. A number of islands are situated along these extended routes. Two-thirds of the way from Capetown to Singapore lies the island of Mauritius. Mauritius also is conveniently situated along the routes from Capetown to Colombo and Bombay. The island of Diego García, in the Chagos Archipelago, lies two-thirds of the way along the five thousand mile route from Aden to Australia.

Since none of the major world powers border on the Indian Ocean, it is often regarded as an area of secondary interest. Its primary economic products—sugar, coconuts, and perfume oils—can be obtained elsewhere. Its fisheries are important, but not vital to Japan, the Republic of China, and the Soviet Union. It has more significance as a transportation route for Middle East oil: ninety-two percent of Japan's oil, eighty-three percent of sub-Saharan Africa's oil, sixty-five percent of Australia's oil, and fifty percent of Europe's oil was carried by tankers across the Indian Ocean in 1969.

The Indian Ocean does have military value for the major powers. Though Great Britain is withdrawing from "East of Suez," she is retaining her rights and interest in staging areas such as Gan Island in the Maldives and in communications stations such as Mauritius.

Britain formed the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965 to secure (jointly with the United States) other staging and communications bases at suitable locations across the ocean (see ch. 3, The Colony of Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory). Elements of the Soviet navy have been cruising there since 1967. Both naval and scientific research are being undertaken in the ocean and on its bottom. Communist China is expected to use it for a ballistic missile test range; and the United States has located space tracking stations there. While the Indian Ocean may not be a vital interest of any of the countries involved, the unrestricted use of the ocean is important to them.

The political value of the Indian Ocean for the major powers has been secondary, also. Great Britain and France have been divesting themselves of their former colonies in the area since the end of World War II. Two Indian Ocean island territories within the scope of this study became independent in the years following World War II: the Republic of Maldives (1965), and Mauritius (1968). Seychelles and its dependencies remain a Crown Colony of Great Britain, but with rising political influence on their own affairs. Réunion became an overseas department of France in 1946. The islands remain economically dependent on their former owners, however, and they offer vulnerable targets for anti-imperialist propaganda. At the same time the Western powers have been disengaging themselves, however, the Soviet Union has been displaying small numbers of her ships throughout the ocean in an apparent effort to lend credibility to her bids for influence in the area.

Attempts are being made to diversify the island economies. Tea has been introduced successfully on Mauritius, and many places are trying to attract and accommodate tourists. Natural resources are severely limited, however, and it is necessary to import staple foods everywhere. The lack of economic sufficiency requires close relations with external sources of support. The principal outside resources have been Great Britain, France, and the United States. In recent years, however, Indian communities have been looking to India for trade and assistance. Economic relations with African countries and with regional organizations also have been developing.

The forces for change in the area can be aligned into two groups. The dominant political force is conservative, oriented toward Europe, and seeks to modernize without revolution. The opposition forces arrayed against the establishment seek more independence, expropriation of foreign economic investments, and follow a policy of non-alignment or of support for Chinese or Soviet communist lines.

The diversity of ethnic origins, the dependence on external sources of economic support, and the divisive effects of appeals to ethnic allegiance have inhibited the development of strong national identities. There is some basis for regional cohesion in the area. French language and culture have been predominant (it has been said that the French colonized without conquest while the British did the opposite), and the conservative political orientation toward Europe has strong economic support. As an independent republic, Mauritius has joined African regional unions, but Réunion is part of France just as Seychelles is part of Britain, and religious and economic rivalries as well as language barriers severely limit the prospects for significant regional organization of territories in the western Indian Ocean.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

Most of the islands of the western Indian Ocean are clustered in a wide arc to the east and northeast of Madagascar. Some are isolated groups strung across the lower latitudes, and others are close to mainland areas.

Among the islands selected for this study, only the Maldives were inhabited prior to the seventeenth century (see Historical Setting in this chapter). The remainder were discovered in their primeval state by sailing ships from European ports seeking shorter, more direct routes across the Indian Ocean to the trading coasts of India. Climatic conditions made the islands natural hothouses. The soils of the larger islands of Seychelles, Mauritius, and Réunion were found to be suitable for a number of tropical and subtropical crops of commercial value. Plantations were established in the Seychelles primarily for the exploitation of native species of coconut palm and, on Réunion and Mauritius, for the introduced sugarcane plant. Workers for the plantations were brought in from both Africa and Asia, and along with the European settlers formed the basis for the mosaic of peoples present in the island today. The system of plantation agriculture dictated the settlement patterns and subsequent patterns and subsequent development of the islands.

The adaptability of the various island groups to human occupation varies. Many of the coral atolls are miniscule in size or awash at high tide. Some lack adequate supplies of fresh water. Few of the coralline islands of Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory (comprising the former Seychelles atolls of Aldabra, Farquhar, and Desroches, and the geographically separate Chagos Archipelago) are permanently inhabited. There are, however, small settlements on some of the atolls occupied by contract workers hired to work guano deposits or to tend coconut plantations. The only coralline islands to have sizeable population concentrations are the Maldives. At the other extreme, Mauritius, a volcanic island, in the short time span of two hundred years has progressed from uninhabited to overpopulated, with one of the highest national densities in the world.

With the exception of Réunion and Mauritius, the island groups are scattered over wide stretches of the ocean and separated from each other by great distances. Communications among the various island groups are irregular to nonexistent. There are few good natural harbors in the islands. Ocean-going vessels are frequently limited to roadsteads, many of which are only seasonally usable. Sites adequate for the construction of modern airfields are scarce. Indeed, the British Indian Ocean Territory was created in recognition of the need to centralize political control over the best natural sites for naval and air installations.

Island Geography and Oceanography

The 2,000 Maldive islands and the Chagos Archipelago are coral atolls. Mauritius, Rodrigues, a dependency of Mauritius, and Réunion—sometimes called the Mascarenes—are volcanic islands that rise from a range of underwater mountains. The same range forms the basis for the vast banks upon which the coralline Seychelles are located. Distinct from the sixty coralline Seychelles is a northern group of thirty-two islands referred to as the granitic Seychelles. They include the main island of Mahé, and the smaller islands of Parslin, La Digue, Silhouette, and Curieuse, all closely grouped within thirty-five miles of Mahé.

The islands of the Indian Ocean are lacking in exploitable minerals. Quarry tile and phosphate rock on Mahé in the granitic Seychelles are the only known deposits. The possibilities of oil-bearing formations in the Chagos Archipelago, on the banks near some of the coralline Seychelles, and in the Maldives are being considered.

Coralline Islands

The coralline islands are low, averaging five feet above sea level, and seldom exceed heights of thirty to fifty feet. Most are grouped into atolls—ring-like formations of islands, some of which may be barely above water at high tide. The central portion of the atoll is usually a lagoon, which may be accessible through breaks in the surrounding reef. If the central lagoons and the passages into them are deep, they make excellent harbors. Examples are Diego García, the southernmost atoll of the Chagos Archipelago and Farquhar atoll on the Seychelles bank. The soils of the coralline islands are uniformly sandy with poor moisture retention capabilities. Where the staple food is rice, as in the Maldive Islands, the porous soils make the growing of paddy difficult.

The ubiquitous coconut palm, however, is ideally adapted to the coralline islands. On many of the islands the natural vegetation has been destroyed and replaced by a thin planting of coconut palms and casuarinas, a quick growing hardwood used for fuel and planking. On other islands vegetation ranges from small trees and shrubs to occasional dense thickets. Grass and low scrub cover dunes, and mangrove lines the shores of creeks and lagoons.

Settlements in the coralline islands are generally small, with rarely more than several hundred people. Supplies of fresh water are scarce and usually must be supplemented with cachements of rain water. On some islands, shallow wells yield potable but brackish water. Contact with the larger islands and the outside world is via supply boat that calls at the settlement several times a year to load copra or other island products.

A number of the coralline islands, particularly in the Seychelles, have served as rookeries for large bird populations. The accumulated deposits of guano have been an important resource of the islands. Many of the deposits have been exhausted, however, and only a few are still being worked.

The Maldives are the only coral atolls with significant numbers of people. Other inhabited atolls in the Indian Ocean support only limited populations, many of them plantation workers not classified as permanent residents.

Aldabra is an example of an atoll in its natural state, a primitive balance of nature untouched by man. Unlike many atolls, Aldabra has an aura of uncompromising harshness. Abrupt overhanging cliffs of grey coral twelve to fifteen feet high edge the shoreline. Atop the low cliffs grows a dense pemphis scrub so thick that a visitor can become lost in fifty yards. Occasional clumps of casuarina and takamaka trees and coconut palms rise above the underbrush, and mangrove lines the shores of the lagoon. The surface of the coral is crumbled and broken in such a way that walking is difficult. The atoll is best known for its unique wildlife and as a nesting ground for birds. The main value of Aldabra, other than to biologists and conservationists, is the suitability of South Island, located on the southern perimeter of the atoll, for the construction of an airfield.

Granitic Islands

The granitic islands in marked contrast to the flat coralline islands have steep slopes rising abruptly from the sea to altitudes of 2,000 to 3,000 feet. The topography is rugged; outcroppings of boulders, towering cliffs, and domes are interspersed with patches of lateritic soil, sometimes fertile, but often thin and easily erodable. On Mahé in the Seychelles white sand beaches are backed by sandflats composed of coral and shell debris, locally called *plateaux*. Some of these flats, which average in elevation about ten feet above low tide, extend inland for a distance of 200 to 300 yards and constitute the most extensive areas of flat surface on the island. The best soils on the island are the alluvial deposits of small streams that accumulate on the level areas behind the sandflats. Where streams fail to cut through the sandflats, small marshlands are sandwiched between them and the hill slopes.

The population of the islands is concentrated in these coastal areas where the original coconut plantations were laid out. Rural densities are high, particularly on Mahé, although almost a quarter of the total population of the islands is classified as urban and lives in Victoria. Density of settlement is much lower in the higher central portion of Mahé and in the smaller outlying islands. Short surface streams in the islands generally supply adequate supplies of fresh water, but flow does diminish during the drier season from May to September. Several small streams on Mahé have been dammed and reservoirs have been constructed to store water and to generate electricity.

The coconut plantations and small patches of vanilla have replaced the broadleaf evergreen rainforests that originally covered the coastal fringes of the islands. Attempts to introduce improved varieties of coconut palm from Ceylon were failures, and the present plantings are native to the islands. The coconut palms are frequently underplanted or interplanted with cinnamon, breadfruit, mango, avocado, bananas, pineapple, pear, papaya, oranges, or patchouli, a small bush valued for the aromatic oil derived from its leaves. Occasionally the groves are used for cattle grazing. Tea bushes were introduced on Mahé in 1962 as a diversifying crop. There are an estimated 1,000 acres of available crown lands in the hills suitable for tea cultivation. The upper slopes are abundantly covered with dense tropical forest; palms, shrubs, and tree ferns grow luxuriantly amid a tangle of undergrowth. Valuable timber trees are still found in the islands and are utilized for reforestation of crown lands: takamaka, used extensively in shipbuilding; bois de table, suitable for house construction and furniture; and casuarina.

The only remaining primary forests are the protected reserves of the coco-de-mer on Praslin and Curieuse in the Seychelles. Coco-de-mer is a large double coconut, the largest seed in the botanical kingdom, that sometimes weighs as much as forty pounds.

The natural beauty of the granitic Seychelles is a major developable resource. More extensive development of tourist facilities, however, hinges upon better sea and air connections with major mainland routes, specifically the completion of the planned international airport on Mahé.

Volcanic Islands

The volcanic islands—Mauritius, Réunion, and Rodrigues—are not unlike the granitic Seychelles in appearance. Precipitous-sloped mountains that look higher than they are rise steeply from the sea culminating in peaks with distinctive outlines. Of the three, only Réunion has an active volcano—Piton de la Fournaise—that occasionally belches smoke, fire, and ashes. The most recent serious eruption occurred in 1961. Although geologically the structure of the islands is volcanic in nature, each is encircled with coral reefs within which are lagoons and fringing beaches of white coral sand.

On Mauritius an undulating plain along the north coast rises toward a central plateau that reaches an elevation of 2,000 feet before dropping off sharply toward the southern and southwestern coasts. From the central plateau rise rugged and jagged peaks, particularly around Port Louis in the west and on the eastern side of the island.

With the exception of the steepest slopes and peaks almost all of Mauritius is inhabited. Because of variations in elevation climate is an important factor in the pattern of settlement. The more affluent residential districts are in the highlands where temperatures are lower. The island is well-watered. Short, fast-flowing rivers drain toward the eastern and western coasts. Two small crater lakes and several man-made reservoirs supplement the fresh water supply. Several of the rivers are harnessed for hydroelectric power, and there is a potential for further development.

Much of the original vegetation on Mauritius has been replaced with plantings of sugarcane. Small groves and roadside plantings of coconuts are common, but most of them are well back from the beaches. The vista of a beach overhung by palms, so typical of other tropical coasts, is rare on Mauritius. On the windward coasts of the island valuable stands of casuarina function as a windbreak and furnish an important share of the island's wood supply. Aloe, a native hemp plant that grows wild on the island and is also cultivated, is used to manufacture sugar sacking in years when imported jute bagging is more expensive than the local product. Tea also has been introduced as a diversifying crop, and plantations have been established on the southwestern section of the plateau.

Réunion has the most spectacular scenery of the three islands. Two towering ranges dominate the topography. In the northwest an older range that consists of the remains of a volcanic cone is topped by the highest point in the islands, Piton des Neiges, 9,965 feet. The peak is encircled by three deep rifts referred to as amphitheaters. In the southeast a younger range includes the active crater in the Fournaise Hills. This end of the island is much less eroded, but is deeply etched with craters. Between the two ranges at elevations of 3,000–6,500 feet is a region of high plains. The northwest-southeast alignment of the mountain ranges divides the island into two sections referred to as the leeward and windward coasts.

Settlement and most of the cultivation on the island is generally restricted to the encircling coastal lowland by the precipitous slopes of the interior. Along this perimeter at intervals are located the majority of the towns; a few settlements at high elevations cater to tourists. A number of short, fast flowing rivers radiate out from the mountain ranges toward the coasts and furnish the island water supply.

The slopes below 4,500–5,000 feet on Réunion are forested with tamarind, reeds, and palmetto. Moist undergrowth is rich in mosses, lichens, ferns, and orchids, one species of which—vanilla—is a commercially valuable crop. Only a small percentage of the land on Réunion, however, is capable of cultivation; on the remainder the slopes are too steep. Some of the steep slopes are utilized for the growing of geranium and vetiver—the oils are commercially valuable as a perfume base—but cultivation entails the risk of soil erosion. Fruit trees—litchis, mangoes, citrus, coffee, and bananas—vie with coconut palms on areas not occupied by the extensive plantings of sugarcane.

Rodrigues, the smallest of the three volcanic islands rises to only 1,300 feet. The original tropical forests have been decimated during the last several hundred years by the ravages of cyclones and the depredations of man. Erosion is now a major problem. Reforestation programs are being carried out by the government of Mauritius. Coconut palms, for example, are being introduced into the lagoon islands, and protective forests are being planted on hilltops and steep slopes. Settlement is scattered throughout the island, and most people are engaged in small farming. Onions, garlic, and maize are the main cultivated crops, the natural vegetation providing grazing for cattle, sheep and goats, pigs, and poultry. Fishing settlements along the coast reflect the secondary occupation of the island; many Rodriguans earn their living from the sea.

Climate

The vast areas of ocean water have a moderating influence on the temperatures of the islands of the Indian Ocean. Days are not as hot and nights not as cool as would normally be expected in tropical and subtropical locations. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. With the exception of locations at higher elevations, average temperatures generally range between 75° to 85° F.; maximums exceed 90° F. only a few days of the year. Nighttime temperatures usually are within 5° F. of peak daytime readings. The mountainous districts of Réunion illustrate the temperature differences associated with higher elevations. On the coast the temperature varies between 64° and 88° F. with peaks of 91° F. In the hills the thermometer ranges between 39° and 64°, and the temperature often falls below 32° after dark. The highest peaks on Réunion can be snow-covered in winter.

Warmer temperatures and heavier precipitation in the islands are generally associated with the summer months, but there are no pronounced wet and dry seasons, some precipitation occuring at all times of the year. The amount of precipitation varies considerably, however, on the mountainous islands; total rainfall increasing with elevation and with exposure on windward slopes. On Mahé in the granitic Seychelles, for example, ninety inches of rainfall are recorded at sea level, increasing to 140 inches on the upper slopes. The smaller, lower granitic islands receive somewhat less precipitation. On Mauritius coastal distribution varies from thirty-five inches in the west to sixty inches in the southeast, and amounts increase rapidly to 250 inches on the plateau. Humidity is uniformly high throughout the island groups, seldom falling below seventy percent.

The most distinctive factors in the climate of the island groups are the system of monsoon winds north of the equator that dominate the Maldives and the cyclonic storms (hurricanes) in the southern hemisphere that periodically devastate the southern Seychelles and the islands of Réunion, Mauritius, and Rodrigues.

The monsoon system of South Asia involves a seasonal reversal of surface winds caused by the uneven heating and cooling of large bodies of water and adjacent landmasses. The general direction of seasonal air flow is from the sea in summer and from the continent in winter. For the Maldives this means that the moisture laden winds that flow from the equatorial regions of the Indian Ocean toward the subcontinent of India beginning in June blow from the southwest. The monsoon may arrive in the form of heavy squalls, deluges of rain, thunder, and strong winds. The most characteristic aspect of monsoon rains is a pulsating rhythm, periods of abatement alternating with fresh bursts, but each day receiving some rainfall. The high winds in turn produce high seas and gale force winds are common. Sea communications are hazardous and most interisland and sea connections with the mainland of India and with Ceylon are severed. In September a calming trend begins followed in October by a period of light and variable winds that presage the arrival of steady breezes from the northeast that blow over the islands through March. April and May are again periods of transition prior to the switch of wind direction to the southwest.

The effects of the monsoon are stronger in the northern Maldives and lessen toward the southern atolls that lie closer to the equator. The lower wind speeds in the south are a plus factor for the location of the British airbase at Gan on Addu, the southernmost atoll in the Maldives. Total annual rainfall, however, increases from north to south (100 to 150 inches), with the southern atolls receiving additional precipitation from tropical equatorial convectional showers.

The trade wind system south of the equator has a strong influence on the other island groups. The trades are constant winds of moderate force that blow from the southeast in the southern hemisphere during the autumn to spring months of May to October. The latitudinal limits of the trade wind belt shift seasonally somewhat, moving southward from the equator in summer with a corresponding drop in wind speed, and migrating northward again toward the equator in winter with increased wind velocities. The northwest monsoon, not as strongly formed, is prevalent over the islands from December to March. April and November are transition months with calm to variable winds. Heavier precipitation is usually associated with the northwest monsoon. The British Indian Ocean Territory and the northern Seychelles are located in the northern portion of the trade wind belt and normally escape the destructive paths of tropical cyclonic storms.

During the summer months of December through March cyclonic storms form in the lower latitudes between 10° and 15°S. Normal storm tracks trend first in a southwesterly direction, then southward, gradually shifting southeastward where the storms weaken and dissipate in the cooler latitudes south of 35°. The storm tracks generally pass in the vicinity of the southern Seychelles and the Mascarenes. Although numerous tropical disturbances form each year, not all of them hit the islands. For those that do, the destruction of life and property can be catastrophic. The so-called storm season is January through March, with storms in March the most feared because of possible damage to the nearly ripe sugarcane crop on Réunion and Mauritius. Less damage to sugarcane plantings occurs earlier in the season when the sugarcane plant bends easily and is not as susceptible to wind damage. The approach of a severe storm is sometimes signaled in the islands by huge swells that move ahead of the storm track. The time interval between crests is indicative of the force of the wind under which the swells were formed. The swells or rollers are sometimes observed several days before the arrival of high winds while the sky is still clear and before the telltale drop in barometric pressure is recorded.

Fauna

Wildlife on the islands of the Indian Ocean is characterized by the presence of large numbers of oceanic and shore birds, a few species of mammals, and almost no insects. Many of the coralline islands of the western Indian Ocean are nesting grounds for large bird populations. Aldabra, in particular, is a vast camp for frigate birds, terns, rails, weavers, sunbirds, kestrels, drongo, petrels, and subspecies of flamingo and ibis. The presence of the birds and the danger they posed to aircraft takeoffs and landings was one of the drawbacks ascribed to the possible construction of an airfield on the atoll. Some of the birds are unique species whose only known breeding grounds are in the islands.

The first visitors to the Seychelles noted the presence of crocodiles, but they too, are now relatively few in number. The giant tortoise, once widely distributed in the Seychelles and now almost extinct, is a protected species of reptile. It can grow to 3 feet high, weigh 600 pounds, and have a life span of up to 200 years. The hunting of the green sea turtle, also in danger of extinction, has been regulated to assure adequate propagation of the species.

There are few insects on the islands. As a result, most of the tick-borne and insect-carried diseases of East Africa are unknown. Malaria-carrying mosquitoes once were abundant, but they were brought under control in the years following World War II. There are a few bats, wildcats, lemurs, and goats in the hills of Réunion, but in general the islands do not have many representatives of the mammalian world.

There are no poisonous snakes or animals dangerous to man on the islands. In the seas around the islands, however, there are abundant sharks. It is dangerous to swim more than fifty feet from shore. Sharks have been known to frequent lagoons in comparatively shallow water.

A number of fresh water fish including trout are found in the streams of the larger islands. Salt water fish, especially tuna and bonito, are known to be plentiful in equatorial waters of the Indian Ocean. Although fish are an important part of the diet of the islanders, local fishermen restrict themselves to coastal waters and there has been no extensive deep-sea fishing. Tuna has been exploited mainly by the Japanese.

HISTORICAL SETTING

Before 1500, Europe had depended on overland routes for its trade with India and the East. For most of the journey the trade goods were in non-European hands. After 1500 European ship construction and navigational techniques were such that sea routes could be used for the entire trip. Merchandise could be selected and traded by Europeans at its point of origin, and could remain under their control until delivered to the European markets.

The seas to and from Europe, around the southern tip of Africa, and across the Indian Ocean were not free, however. Shortly after Portuguese merchantmen began rounding the Cape of Good Hope at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Arab and Indian pirates also discovered the value of this new trade route. The Portuguese were soon joined by Dutch, French, and English traders, and renegade European sailors with stolen ships, used the islands off Madagascar as bases from which to raid the passing fleets.

Competition over the lucrative Oriental trade quickly became more than a matter between businessmen. The governments and royal houses of Europe saw the potential revenue of international commerce. Privateers, either authorized or condoned, attacked the vessels of foreign flags, as well as one another.

Freedom of the seas could have little meaning until there was control of the seas. First the Portuguese and then the Dutch withdrew leaving France and Britain to contend for control until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. In gaining control of Seychelles, Mauritius, and the lesser islands in the area, the British secured safe passage across the Indian Ocean. Réunion, an isolated French outpost, was no longer a source of interference to British shipping. The only other possible pirate stronghold, the Maldive Islands southwest of Ceylon, had come under British jurisdiction in 1796.

During the nineteenth century the Indian Ocean and most of its islands and bordering lands were subject to British authority. Even before the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, the security value of the Indian Ocean islands had greatly diminished. Once the canal was available, the islands were by-passed. Mauritius, Réunion, and Seychelles served as supply bases for the ships sailing the route around the southern tip of Africa. Sugar and coconut plantations were developed to furnish trade goods for both the Eastern and the European markets.

By 1900, however, the commodities of international trade had changed, making the islands' sugar and coconuts less important. Steel-hulled steamships, using the short route through Suez, did not need resupply stations in the western Indian Ocean. France and Britain retained control of the islands, however, long after it was profitable to do so. European landowners continued their one-crop agriculture, subsidized by the home-country governments.

The Indian Ocean continued to be of economic importance to the West as a transportation route between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. It was of strategic importance during World War II because France and Britain still held colonial possessions in Asia that had to be recaptured from the Japanese.

Between the end of World War II and the mid-1960s, the Indian Ocean was usually given low priority in European and American national security estimates. Japan's defeat had left her with no influence in the area. The dissolution of the British empire ended its need for elaborate land-based military defense establishments. Military facilities were retained in Singapore and in the Maldives as a precautionary measure during the phase-out period, but their capabilities were reduced to handling only local disturbances.

Until the mid-1960s there seemed to be no immediate or specific threat to Western access or control of the Indian Ocean. The Soviet navy, with no aircraft carriers, had confined its submarine fleet's activity largely to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. China was not a maritime power, and India's navy was limited to coastal defense. Britain, however, maintained naval communications and monitoring stations in Seychelles and Mauritius, and the United States operated a space tracking and telemetry station in Seychelles.

In 1965, when Britain was withdrawing from "East of Suez," a special defense zone was established in the western part of the Indian Ocean. By re-districting certain islands belonging to Mauritius and Seychelles, Britain created a new crown colony, the British Indian Ocean Territory. An agreement with the United States allowed joint use of the territory for communications and defense facilities (see ch. 3, The Colony of Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory).

The Suez Canal, which for a century had been considered a critical factor in maritime shipping between Europe and Asia, was made impassable in 1967 by ships scuttled during the war between Israel and the United Arab Republic. In the years the canal remained closed, denial of the Red Sea route was circumvented by the construction of super-tankers to ship Middle East oil via the Indian Ocean with economy and speed to the world markets.

European and American awareness of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean was dramatically aroused in 1968 by the appearance of Soviet warships there for the first time. Although Soviet submarines had been known to transit the area, the arrival of missile cruisers and supply ships was unprecedented. Britain regarded the Soviet operations as further justification for establishing the British Indian Ocean Territory and for proposing to refurbish the naval base at Simonstown, South Africa. African and Indian reactions against the 1970 British proposal reverberated around the Indian Ocean basin and throughout the Commonwealth. The African governments wanted no new arms in South Africa, and India wanted the ocean to be neutralized.

In 1971, as the major powers undertook low-key operations in the Indian Ocean, as the oil-producing states on its northern shores became increasingly restive, and as the possibilities for reopening the Suez Canal improved, world attention focused once again on the islands and peoples in the seas between Africa and India.

The Republic of Maldives

From some unrecorded time before the Christian era the Maldive Islands have been populated by Dravidian, Veddoid, and Sinhalese peoples from India and Ceylon. Although intermarriage and centuries of separation from the mainland have produced a "Maldivian" person, vestiges of the original physical and cultural characteristics persist.

The earliest contact between the original population of the Maldives and the Western world seems to have been through the Arabic civilization. There is no record of influence prior to the acceptance of Islam by the islanders in the twelfth century. The first Europeans known to have reached the Maldives were Portuguese, who came in 1507. They were replaced by the Dutch in the mid-1600s. By then the Dutch were administering the government of Ceylon, under which the Maldivian sultan had accepted a protectorate relationship.

With the acceptance of Islam, the Maldivians also adopted a sultanate form of government. Except for a brief episode in 1953, the sultanate continued in the islands from 1153 until the Republic of Maldives was established by national referendum in 1968.

The British took control of Ceylon from the Dutch in 1796, and continued the Ceylon-dependency arrangement of governing the Maldives. With the exception of the period during which the Portuguese traders occupied the islands, the Maldivians had little direct contact with their European rulers. Since both the Dutch and the English chose to administer Maldivian affairs through the government of Ceylon, local traditions and customs were subject to less disruption than was the case in those colonial societies that were ruled directly.

For any colonial power, the economic value of the Maldives was limited. Exports consisted mainly of dried fish and coconut byproducts, the bulk of which was sold in Ceylon and India. The small population and the non-industrial technology of the islands did not produce sufficient processed fish and coconut to interest the commercial markets of colonial Britain. Maldivian society was left to follow its traditional pursuits, one of which was to remain apart from the industrial world. Independence from Great Britain in 1965 left the people of the islands little changed.

Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory

The Seychelles Islands were uninhabited when Portuguese sailors happened on to them early in the sixteenth century, and for the next 200 years only pirates used them. British ships visited the islands in 1609, but until the French arrived in 1742, there was no interest in exploring the archipelago.

In 1756 the French formally named the island group "Sechelles," in honor of Vicomte Moreau des Séchelles, Minister of Finance to Louis XV. In naming the islands, the French thereby took possession of them.

Colonization of Seychelles was begun in 1768 by French planters and their African slaves from Mauritius and Réunion. There was increasing competition between the European powers over trade with India and the East Indies, and ships sailing from Europe to the East needed supply stations enroute. The trading companies needed commodities to exchange in the European Eastern markets. To satisfy both these needs, the French settlers developed plantations to provide fresh fruit and copra. Indigenous tortoises and local timber added to the economic value of the islands.

During the wars between France, Great Britain, Holland, Spain, and Sardinia (off-and-on from 1793 to 1814), French ships out of Mauritius and Seychelles attacked British men-of-war until the British, tired of the harassment, blockaded the islands in 1794. The islands were formally ceded to Britain by the first Treaty of Paris in 1814.

After 1814, Great Britain administered Mauritius and Seychelles as a single unit until Seychelles was given its Board of Civil Commissioners in 1872. Successive degrees of autonomy were awarded the islands over the years. In 1903, Seychelles became a Crown Colony, administered by a British-appointed governor.

The French population was not displaced by the English, however. Landowners and local officials remained of French origin. French customs, laws, and language were undisturbed in accordance with the terms of the 1814 Treaty of Paris.

The Battle of Waterloo (1815) saw the end of France's commercial empire. Great Britain controlled some of France's former possessions, and the sea routes to the East were free of French competition. Seychelles no longer played its original critical role in European trade. After the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, the islands' importance declined further. The advent of steel-hulled steamships a few years later left Seychelles all but forgotten by the time it became a Crown Colony in 1903.

After the abolition of slavery in 1833 indentured Indian laborers were brought in to work the coconut plantations. A few Chinese immigrated to become shopkeepers. French immigration ceased, and the British presence remained nominal. The twentieth century population of Seychelles is largely descended from the original French settlers, their African slaves, the indentured laborers from India, and the Chinese merchants. Intermarriage has given the islands a cosmopolitan quality. Africans, Creoles, and Eurasians, speaking a variety of languages, characterize the people of Seychelles.

The British style of governing Seychelles has been, from the beginning, one of semi-autonomous rule. Only a few Britons are stationed in the islands, and they administer the affairs of government through native officials. Loyalty to Great Britain is strong among the people despite their French and African heritages. For a few years in the early 1960s, one of Seychelles two political parties advocated independence from Great Britain. The issue elicited little interest, however, and was soon dropped.

Mauritius

Mauritius was visited occasionally by Arab and Malay sailors during the Middle Ages. The first European to come to the island was probably the Portuguese sailor Domingos Fernandez, early in the sixteenth century. The island remained uninhabited until the Dutch settled there in 1598, naming it after their ruler, Prince Maurice of Nassau. British and French ships then began calling at the island for water and food, and for the highly-prized ebony. The Dutch, however, with slaves from Madagascar, never numbered over 300, and the colony was abandoned in 1710 as being unprofitable. They left the ebony forests decimated, and the dodo bird extinct.

The island was deserted until the French claimed it in 1715, calling it Ile de France. A permanent settlement was established in 1722, and until 1767 Ile de France was governed by the French East India Company. The first French settlers were colonists and their African slaves from the island of Bourbon (now Réunion) who began to cultivate the land. Sugarcane, introduced from the Far East, soon became the principal crop.

In 1767, as a result of economic difficulties, the French East India Company sold Ile de France to the French government. During the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars the inhabitants set up a government virtually independent of France. They continued to participate in France's wars, however, as evidenced by the raids carried on against British shipping. In 1810, the British retaliated by blockading the island, along with Bourbon, Seychelles, and Rodrigues. By the first Treaty of Paris, Bourbon was given back to France, but Mauritius, as the island was renamed, was kept by Great Britain. The terms of the cession provided that the French inhabitants should retain their language, laws, and customs.

The abolition of slavery in 1833, however, brought about some significant changes both in the island's agriculture and in its social structure. The population of Mauritius then numbered some 100,000, of which 75,000 were African slaves. To replace that manpower, indentured laborers were brought from India. Between 1834 and 1920, the net immigration of Indians who came to work the plantations is estimated at 285,000. By 1940, Indians represented two-thirds of the island's population.

The immigration of Muslim and Hindu labor eventuated in acute social and political tensions. As the island's economic development fell behind the population growth rate, the competition for jobs increased. As the island moved towards independent statehood (in 1968), competition over political power erupted into riots. The rivalries were drawn along religious and ethnic lines, with the descendants of the French colonists, the Creoles, the Muslims, and the Hindus each seeking to protect their own interests.

Under British rule, Mauritius had constitutional governments, but until 1948, public officials were selected by a property-owning electorate—a practice which effectively excluded non-Europeans. Participation in the process of government was not a tradition for most of the population. There was little reason to feel a national identity, and even less opportunity for the several groups to work together for common goals. Nevertheless, Mauritius was given full control over its domestic affairs in 1965, and on March 12, 1968 it became an independent member of the British Commonwealth.

Réunion

The Portuguese explorer Pedro de Mascarenhas found Réunion uninhabited when he discovered it early in the sixteenth century. The island remained without permanent residents until the French East India Company established a colony there in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Slave labor, brought from Madagascar and East Africa, provided manpower for coffee and sugar plantations whose products were used in the French colonial trade. The British fleet blockaded Réunion intermittently during the Napoleonic Wars, interrupting the importation of new slaves and the export of commodities. Otherwise life on the island changed little until France outlawed slavery in 1848.

Following an example set by the Mauritian plantation-owners who were faced with loss of their slaves in 1833, Réunionnais planters imported indentured laborers from India. Although there are no known records of the volume of Indian immigration during the earlier years, official British reports give an estimate of 19,000 workers for the years 1861–1877. Réunion, like Mauritius, was to have a multiracial, polyethnic society characteristic of French colonies.

Réunion remained a colony until it became an overseas department in 1946. Although geographically separate from continental France, as a department the island has most of the political attributes of a metropolitan department. Its geographical separation has given the Réunion Communist Party an opportunity to agitate for the island's independence from France. Identification with French culture and with the French political state, however, remains strong.

POPULATION, ETHNIC GROUPS, AND LANGUAGES

Populations throughout the area are composed generally of Indians, Africans, and various mixtures of the two ethnic groups. Except in the Maldives, European admixture has been recognized as culturally more significant than the relatively small numbers of mixed Europeans might imply. In Seychelles ethnic identity is less important than it is in Mauritius where occupations and political organizations are aligned on ethnic bases. Rapid population growth has overburdened local economies and welfare resources, but efforts to promote emigration and birth control have not been widely effective.

The most common language spoken everywhere except in the Maldives is Creole—a local hybrid of French and African languages. Hindi, Urdu, French, and English are broadly represented.

There are Muslims, Hindus, and Christians almost everywhere except in the Maldives which are essentially Islamic. Elsewhere one faith usually is predominant. In most societies many people also hold a variety of folk beliefs and practice folk medicine and magic.

The population of the Republic of Maldives totals 107,000 persons. Calling themselves the "men of the islands," the Maldivians are the descendants of settlers from India, Ceylon, Arabia, and Africa. Their language is related to the Sinhalese spoken on Ceylon. They write with an Arabic script and have been slowly Islamized over a period of many centuries. They live in small, neat settlements where violence is rare and face-to-face relations are the characteristic means of social control.

Malaria and other tropical diseases have been brought under increased control in the Maldives with assistance from the World Health Organization. Modern medical practices also have begun to replace traditional folk techniques. The population is beginning to grow at a high rate, however, and additional outside assistance will be required in the 1970s.

The British Crown Colony of Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory support a population of 51,000 persons in a mixed society without strong ethnic cleavages. Social distinctions based on skin color, wealth, and life style exist and are paralleled in political life, but a lingua franca—Creole—and a common religion —Roman Catholicism—are unifying factors, and upward movement within the social structure is possible.

Most of the population of Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory is concentrated on Mahé, while transient groups work the plantations and mineral deposits on the coral outliers. The capital city of Victoria attracts growing numbers of people, and the government provides some public housing. Education also is supported by the government, and to a greater extent by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. As malaria has been eradicated and as government-supported medical programs have become increasingly effective, the birth rate has been rising. The lack of effective emigration outlets and birth control methods has resulted in heavy population pressure on the local economy requiring additional amounts of external support.

More than 810,000 persons live on the little island of Mauritius. The population comprises five ethnic groups—Hindu, Muslim, Creole, Chinese, and French—in a complex society which maintains barriers between them. Individual ethnic groups monopolize occupations which are sanctioned and protected by parallel political organizations.

Accompanying the ethnic diversity of the Mauritian population are religious divisions. Forty percent of the people are Hindus, thirty percent are Christian, and about fifteen percent are Muslim. There is no one-to-one correspondence between religion and ethnic group, however. Christians are ethnically the most diverse, since becoming Christian is one way to acquire a mark of higher social position. Ethnic identity, however, is frequently shown by one's food habits and clothes.

Rapid population growth is the most serious problem in Mauritius. Improvements in medical and public health practices following World War II have led to sharp declines of annual death rates and accelerations of annual birth rates. Public and private efforts to introduce birth control methods, encourage emigration, and increase economic development have met with only limited success. In the early 1970s, the density of Mauritius' population exceeded 1,100 persons per square mile—one of the highest in the world. The debilitating effects of malnutrition and tropical parasites have been serious, but government-supported hospitals, clinics, and health education programs have been contending with these problems.

Réunion, whose population numbers about 426,000 persons, has a complex social structure reflecting its diverse ethnic origins. With African, Indian, and European components, Réunionnais society has evolved a graduated series of subgroups that have no rigid divisions between them. Like the Seychellois, most Réunionnais are Roman Catholic and speak a kind of Creole. Intermarriage has prevented the formation of castes, and an ambitious individual can improve his social position.

Most Réunionnais live on the coastal lowlands and overpopulation is a problem. Emigration to metropolitan France and Madagascar is encouraged and had reached a rate of about seven percent a year in the late 1960s. Malnutrition, parasitic diseases, tuberculosis, and alcoholism have been serious problems, but the government and the Roman Catholic Church have been making progress against them by bringing more medical facilities and education to the people. The church and the government also provide welfare benefits and schools.

CHAPTER 2

THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

The Republic of Maldives is an archipelago of far flung tropical atolls in the northcentral Indian Ocean (see fig 2). Spanning an arc more than 500 miles long, the islands rise only a few feet above the level of the sea. Isolated from India and Ceylon by more than 400 miles of water and remotely situated from major trade routes, and Maldives survive outside the mainstream of world commerce and communication. Movement even within the archipelago is limited, and only Male, the centrally located capital, has a concentrated population of 12,000 persons.

The Republic has strategic importance, however, far greater than its social or political situation suggests. This importance derives from the location of a British military air base on the southern island of Gan in Addu Atoll. As a staging post for aircraft flying between Great Britain and the Far East, the Gan airfield is a strategic link in the chain of Indian Ocean bases maintained by the United Kingdom. Its importance was underscored after the British announced in February 1968 that they planned to withdraw their military forces "East of Suez" by 1971. Elements of the Soviet fleet soon appeared in the Indian Ocean, and Western opinion of the strategic value of the region suddenly changed. After many years of secondary or lesser interest, the islands became strategically important once again.

Though cooled by sea breezes, the climate in the Maldives is continually hot and humid. The soils of the little islands support hardly more than a coconut and scrub vegetation. The population of 107,000 persons is unevenly distributed in small settlements noted for their neatness and cleanliness. The people originally came from India and Ceylon, and although they were slowly Islamized, their social organization still reflects some of the rigid qualities of mainland society. Traditional Maldivian values of moderation, peace, and order are interwoven with Islamic religious and legal precepts which support family stability and repudiate violence. The modern republican form of government is not based on any democratic traditions but is superimposed on an Islamic autocracy. Politics, like internal security, is based on face-to-face relationships and personal recognizance.

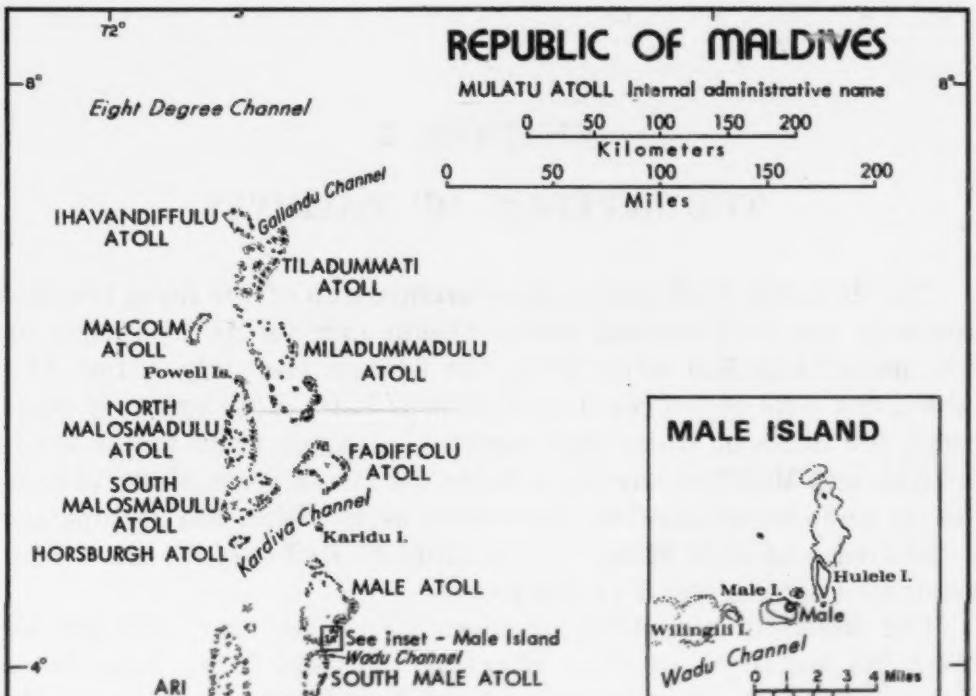
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES
MULATU ATOLL Internal administrative name
0 50 100 150 200
Kilometers
0 50 100 150 200
Miles
72°
8°
75°
4°
0°
Eight Degree Channel
Gallandu Channel
IHAVANDIFFULU ATOLL
TILADUMMATI ATOLL
MALCOLM ATOLL
MILADUMMADULU ATOLL
Powell Is.
NORTH MALOSMADULU ATOLL
FADIFFOLU ATOLL
SOUTH MALOSMADULU ATOLL
Kardiva Channel
Karidu I.
HORSBURGH ATOLL
MALE ATOLL
See inset - Male Island
Wadu Channel
SOUTH MALE ATOLL
ARI ATOLL
Felidu Channel
Ariyaddu Channel
FELIDU ATOLL
Wataru Reef
Wataru Channel
NILANDU ATOLL
MULAKU ATOLL
Kudahuradu Channel
Indian Ocean
KOLUMADULU ATOLL
Veimandu Channel
HADDUMMATI ATOLL
One and a Half Degree Channel
SUVADIVA ATOLL
Equatorial Channel
Pua Mulaku I.
ADDU ATOLL
See inset - Addu Atoll
MALE ISLAND
Hulele I.
Male I.
Male
Wilingili I.
Wadu Channel
0 1 2 3 4 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 Kilometers
ADDU ATOLL
Mahira I.
Midu I.
Hitaddu I.
Heratera I.
Abuhera I.
Fedu I.
Gan
Wilingili I.
Gan I.
0 1 2 3 4 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

Figure 2. Republic of Maldives.

The Maldivian economy is rather sensitively poised on an unmechanized fishing industry which must produce enough dried fish both to feed the population and to trade for rice, a dietary staple that must be imported. Economic and technical assistance has been provided to the Maldives by its fellow members of the Colombo Plan and by United Nations organizations. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, has helped to combat a variety of endemic diseases including malaria, filariasis, typhoid fever, and poliomyelitis.

Maldivian national identity seems secured by a common religion, a common history, and a common language. As the people themselves express it, they are the "men of the islands."

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Maldives are a string of 19 coral atolls extending over 550 miles in a north-south direction from 7°06′N to 0°42′S latitude and between 72°33′E and 73°44′E longitude. They are located about 400 miles southwest of Ceylon and roughly the same distance from the southern tip of India. The atolls comprise approximately 2,000 islands but only 215 of them are inhabited. The islands are small, the average size is just over ¼ square mile and none is larger than 5 square miles; the total land area of the Maldives constitutes a little over 100 square miles.

General Characteristics

Fourteen of the 19 atolls have lagoons that afford anchorages for boats and for ships of medium draft. Although the surrounding reefs are formed of thickly grown coral, there is no evidence of coral at the bottoms of the lagoons. East-west passage through the island chain is provided by a number of clear navigable channels, but most ship traffic passes through Eight Degree Channel between the northern extremity of the Maldives and Minicoy Island in the southern Laccadives.

The islands are low with elevations averaging 5 to 6 feet above sea level. The higher elevations tend to be located toward the seaward sides of the islands; inner shores are frequently marshy and are probably the breeding areas for the anopheles mosquito which has spread malaria widely through the atolls.

The most important islands are Mâle on the southern end of North Male Atoll in the central part of the chain and Gan at the southwestern extremity of Addu, the southernmost of the Maldivian atolls. Gan is the site of a British Royal Air Force airbase. Of lesser importance are the islands in the atolls of Suvadiva, Tiladummati, Miladummadulu, and Malosmadulu.

Settlement Patterns

Male is only a mile long and half a mile or so wide. The island town is laid out geometrically, with broad streets that cross at right angles. Roads are built on crushed coral bases and surfaced with brushed sand. The sturdier buildings that line the streets are constructed of crushed coral and lime mortar, and coral walls enclose the compound of each structure. Poorer housing utilizes palm thatch with tin roofs. Within the housing compounds, kitchens are usually separate buildings. Newer housing has broad verandahs. There are many mosques—one at almost every street corner.

Administratively, Male is divided into four wards. Each is responsible for its own services. Houses are numbered, and street lighting for all of Male is provided by a diesel-powered generator. The streets are kept spotlessly clean, each household being responsible for the section in front of its dwelling. There are no domestic animals. There are some bicycles on the island and a few cars, but most people walk. Trees provide shade and each compound has its own small garden with a variety of flowering plants, but the glare of the tropical sun as it is reflected from the bleached coral walls seems to intensify the heat and combined with the high humidity contributes to the discomfort of unacclimated visitors to the island.

With the exception of the facilities at the airfield on Gan, the other islands are much more primitive. Where there are roads, the pattern invariably consists of a broad coral sand street that stretches the length of the island, with a shorter road intersecting the main road at right angles. The latter road almost always leads from the wharf or landing beach. Buildings are strung out along either side of the road. Only the main buildings of the settlement are of coral, most are palm-thatched.

Communications and Transportation

Sailing craft are the primary means of inter-island communications, although the number of motorized craft is increasing. There are no scheduled services, and local transport is usually arranged individually with fishermen. Male was declared a free port in 1967, but there are no scheduled commercial services with other countries. A small Maldivian steamer plies between the ports of Colombo and Male on a monthly to bi-monthly basis depending upon cargo and need.

Male can be reached also by chartered plane. On Hulele, an island about one mile from Male, there is a small airfield that was built by the British during World War II. It was opened for civilian use in 1966, and monthly service by Air Ceylon was inaugurated a year later. The regular schedule was discontinued in 1969, however.

The British airfield on Gan, 330 miles south of Male, has all modern facilities and serves as a way station for planes bound for the Far East. There are no communications, however, between Gan and the atolls to the north.

POPULATION AND LABOR FORCE

Population Structure

The United Nations estimate of the population in 1967 was 104,000. This figure represented an increase of 19,000 since 1950. For 1968, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the estimate was 106,969.

Males outnumbered females in 1966, 1967, and 1968 (see table 1). There was an annual rate of growth of 3.8 percent in 1966, and 3.5 percent in 1967. Such high rates are similar to those of Pakistan (3.3 percent) and the Philippines (3.5 percent).

Table 1. Population Distribution in the Maldives, by Sex, 1966, 1967, and 1968

	Males		Females		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total
1966	53,938	53.4	46,945	46.6	100,833
1967	55,346	53.3	48,455	46.7	103,801
1968	56,983	53.3	49,986	46.7	106,969

Source: Adapted from *The Sixteenth Annual Report of the Consultative Committee, 1968: The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia*, Colombo, 1969; and *The Seventeenth Annual Report of the Consultative Committee, 1969: The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia*, Colombo, 1970.

The distribution of population is uneven. Only ten percent of the islands are inhabited. About one-tenth of the population resides on the capital island of Male. Foreign nationals also are concentrated on Male.

Population Dynamics

For 1965, the latest year for which information is available, there were 4,912 births (including stillbirths) registered. The birth rate was 50.1 per thousand. In the same year, 2,241 deaths were registered, resulting in a rate of 22.9 per thousand.

The resultant rate of natural increase is 27.2 per thousand. Indications are that barring great inaccuracies in reporting of data, this is fairly close to the total rate of increase. There are no data which suggest significant rates of immigration or emigration, and given the isolation of the Maldives and the nature of their economy, migration does not seem to be of much importance to population growth.

The high rate of growth poses a number of problems for the islanders. Among these is the food supply, for a dietary staple, rice, is not grown in the islands. A large proportion of young people also places a strain on educational facilities. No information is available as to whether the Maldivian government recognizes any population problems. Nevertheless, certain attitudes toward population control can be predicted because the Maldivians are Islamic. Recent interpretations by Islamic legal specialists recognize the permissibility of contraceptive measures so long as these do not result in sterility. On the other hand, both Islamic custom and Qur'anic verse favor large families by positive injunction.

Labor Force

The chief division of labor is by sex, although there is also a noticeable ethnic division. Women tend to follow occupations which can be undertaken in or near the home, while men are free to pursue other jobs. Thus women weave mats of cadjan (palm leaf fiber) and coir (coconut husk fiber), collect shells for export, and make pillow lace. About half of the men are fishers. Others engage in mat weaving, carpentry, masonry, lacquer work, other crafts, and farming. A few hundred are employed at the Gan Island air base. Much of the retail and import-export trade is in the hands of Indians belonging to a Shia Muslim sect (see Ethnic Groups, Languages, and Religion in this chapter). There are also local specializations within the labor force. For example, the center of mat weaving is in the southern atolls, and Turadu Island is the center for lacquer work.

Recruitment and training of the labor force appear to be traditional, that is, based on the family. Professional workers constitute a partial exception, for they also receive training in the public schools.

ETHNIC GROUPS, LANGUAGES, AND RELIGION

Historical Background

The original population of the Maldive Islands was similar to the population of southern India and Ceylon. Old Maldivian legends refer to the ancient presence of dark people like the Veddas of Ceylon, and there are still elements of the population resembling them. Around the beginning of the Christian Era, or perhaps a few centuries earlier, Indo-European peoples began settling both Ceylon and the Maldive Islands. These people remain the dominant element in the Maldivian population.

Beginning around the ninth century A.D. Muslim Arabs began to penetrate the area and to settle in small numbers from time to time. During the same period Negroes from Africa were brought to the Islands. Indian merchants have formed a colony in the Maldives since the 17th century. A few other Indian Ocean peoples, such as Malays, also have settled in the Islands.

As in Ceylon, Buddhism reached the Maldives in the 2d or 3d century B.C. Ruins of Buddhist religious structures are still to be found. Although Muslim Arabs had been visiting the islands since the 9th century, it was not until the 12th century Islam became the official religion, supplanting Buddhism. Maldivian legend tells of a Moroccan holy man who converted the islanders to Islam after vanquishing a monster who had been demanding an annual quota of young girls.

The Islamic transformation of life was slow, for in the 14th century, Ibn Batuta, an Arab traveller and religious scholar, noted with dismay many non-Islamic customs. During his tenure there as *qadi* (judge) he attempted to bring the Maldivians closer to orthodoxy. In repeated contacts with the rest of the Muslim world through travellers, scholars, merchants, and pilgrims to Mecca, the Maldive Islanders gradually transformed their customs and, in 1674 a monument to Islam, the Hukuru Miskit, the chief mosque on Male, was built.

The final Islamization of the Maldive Islands was preceded by a Portuguese attempt to impose Christianity in the 16th century. Although the Sultan and some of his family were converted, the islands have remained Islamic.

Ethnic Groups

The native Maldivian calls himself *divessi* (a man of the islands), and his homeland, *Divehi Raje* (the kingdom of islands). The strong nationalist feelings of the Maldivians would thus appear to be based on attachment to the place they inhabit and on their identity as Muslims in a largely non-Islamic region.

Four major elements in the population can be distinguished: The Sinhalese, the Dravidian, the Arab, and the Negro. The proportions of these tend to vary locally. In the northern atolls, the inhabitants tend to have the dark skin, curly hair, and short stature characteristic of the Dravidian peoples of Ceylon and southern India. In the central atolls, including Male, the lighter skinned

Arab or Mediterranean element is more typical. In the southern atolls, which have been somewhat isolated from the rest of the archipelago, the population more closely resembles the Sinhalese inhabitants of Ceylon, being lighter of skin and taller in stature than the people of the northern atolls. Some sources indicate that the people whose Negro origins are obvious form a separate endogamous sub-group called the Ravare.

The only distinct ethnic minority are the Indians, who also are a religious minority. Forming a separate community of traders in Male, they number several hundred. They are distinctive in physical appearance, for they are taller and more angular in physique than the Maldivians and wear Indian style dress. They also speak their own language, a dialect of Hindi.

Languages

The Maldivian language belongs to the Indo-European language family; it is distantly related to English. It is closely related to Elu, an archaic form of Sinhalese, an Indo-Aryan language which has followed a somewhat isolated development in Ceylon. The Maldivian language has numerous loan-words from Arabic, from Hindi, which is used in trade with the Indian merchants, and from Ceylonese Dravidian languages such as Tamil.

The language has contributed one word, atoll, to international usage. The name Maldive is a compound of the Arabic *mahal* (palace) and old Sinhalese *diva* (island); it referred originally to the main island, Male.

The language spoken in the Maldives has two alphabets, one an adaptation of the Arabic alphabet, and the other, called Tana, from the old Sinhalese Sanskrit-based alphabet. Both are taught in the schools. The numbers from 1 to 12 are of Sinhalese origin, and after 12, from Hindi. The names of days are Sinhalese and Hindi.

Arabic, the language of Islam, is widely known as a written language. It is used in religious ceremonies and has contributed heavily to the Maldivian vocabulary. Names of persons are in Arabic.

Hindi and Sinhalese are known principally among the elite and those engaged in trade. Both have contributed loan-words to Maldivian. Because of connections with Great Britain, including the presence of the Gan Island base, English has a limited currency.

Religion

Islam is the state religion of the Maldive Islands. The Maldivians are Muslims belonging to the Sunni, the largest branch of

Islam. Sunnis are those who, after an early political schism, follow the actual line of succession from Muhammad and adhere more closely to ancient Arab customs. They call themselves Sunni, from the Arabic *sunnah* (custom), because they believe that they follow the custom of the Prophet.

Central to membership in the Islamic community is the profession of the *shahadah*: There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. Thus, Muslims oppose themselves to polytheism, and accept Muhammad's book, the Qur'an, as the final divine revelation. The Qur'an, together with practices of Muhammad and early Muslims, forms the basis for Islamic theology, canon law (the *shari'ah*), and many popular customs.,

Muslims believe that Islam is the culmination of the religious development begun in Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad is the greatest and the last of the prophets but is not considered divine. His predecessors included Abraham, Moses and the other Old Testament Prophets, a number of Arabian prophets, and Jesus. Islamic theology, although highly developed in the Middle Ages, has not had the effect upon the daily life of Muslims that the canon law has had. Nonetheless, concepts of the transcendence and omnipotence of God have had a pervasive influence upon Islamic life. Muslims also believe in angels, *jinn*, and other spirits, predestination, a final day of judgment, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life of joy or punishment. They do not accept the concept of original sin, nor of any mediator between God and man.

Although the *shari'ah* is the product of medieval scholasticism, it nevertheless has a strong practical bent. For example, a person is permitted to carry out business transactions while on the pilgrimage to Mecca so that the required journey is not too great a financial hardship. Neither asceticism nor sensuality is condoned. The life of Muhammad, which was simple but ordinary, is held up as a model. Theoretically, the *shari'ah* applies to all aspects of life, regulating both the relations of man to man, and of man to God. In practice, it has had the strongest influence upon personal status and upon devotional life.

Five duties, known as the Five Pillars, are required of Muslims: The recital of the *shahadah*, the performance of the five daily ritual prayers, the giving of alms, the fast during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam exempts from these duties those who are not able for serious reasons.

Characteristic institutions of the Islamic community include the Friday mosque, the *waqf*, the *madrasah* and *kuttab*, and the law. Friday is the day set aside for communal prayer in the mosque; the men are supposed to gather at the noon prayer for the ritual and to hear a sermon. The *waqf* is a charitable foundation, founded for pious purposes, such as the maintenance of a mosque or school, or to retain family property intact against the requirements of the law on inheritance. The *madrasah* and *kuttab* are schools (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

Legal institutions are highly developed in Islam. There are numerous types of legal specialists, of whom the most important are the *qadi* (judge), *faqih* (lawyer), and *mufti* (one who renders legal opinions). These specialists at the same time interpret and revise the law, and administer justice, while the coercive power resides in the state. In the Maldive Islands, the *shari'ah* is the law, and the traditional specialists are in charge of it.

The Maldivians are pious Muslims. Their devotion is shown in the cult of saints many of whose tombs, decorated with white flags, are to be found throughout the Islands. Frowned upon by strict clergy, the cult of the saints is a popular form of devotion found in most parts of the Islamic world. The saints are resorted to for intercession with God, and for curing and solving problems.

The Maldivians also subscribe to religious beliefs and practices which are not Islamic. They believe in spirits and *jinn* which may possess persons or cause disease. For protection against these evils, the people often resort to charms, and to magicians and exorcisers. Conjuring and astrology are also practiced. The Maldive Islands once had a reputation in the surrounding region for their magic and sorcery.

The Indian merchants of Male belong to a Shiite sect called the Bohras. Shiites belong to the other great branch of Islam which split with the Sunnis over a question of succession and who have developed separate laws and beliefs. The Bohras are Ismaili Shias. Indian Bohras have traditionally specialized in commerce.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Social Structure

There is some evidence that a caste structure was formerly present in the Maldive Islands. As recently as the 1920's, sumptuary laws regulated the style of clothing which the various classes could wear. Other evidence suggests that the caste-like features were but the result of emulation of Hindu practices in India and were not essential in the Maldivian social system.

Maldivian families are ranked according to wealth, political power, occupation, adherence to the Islamic virtues, and nobility of descent. Persons related to the former Sultan, business and professional people, scholars, and religious specialists constitute an elite. Some add the term *Didi*, meaning esquire, to their names.

The ordinary people, workers, fishers, artisans, and farmers, make up the majority of the population.

There appears to be a degree of local and ethnic occupational specialization (see Population and Labor Force; Ethnic Groups, Languages, and Religion in this chapter). However, there is nothing to suggest that any ethnic group has privileged access to high status. Because Male is the capital, members of the elite tend to be concentrated on that island. Although social rank tends to be inherited, the operation of the system is not rigid. Individuals may raise their status by acquiring a higher education and entering the professions. The various social classes intermarry fairly readily.

Family

The man is the head of the Maldivian family household. As Muslims, the men may have as many as four wives, but there is no evidence to suggest that many have more than one. Islamic law, too, makes divorce easier for men than for women. Family units, however, appear to be stable. Family households are generally of two varieties: the nuclear, consisting of a married couple and their children; and the extended, consisting of a married couple, their unmarried children, married sons, and their families. Typically, unmarried adults remain with relatives instead of living alone or with strangers. Polygynous men maintain each wife and her children separately.

Descent is patrilineal, meaning that family membership follows the male line. Inheritance of property is through both males and females.

The status of women has traditionally been fairly high in the Maldive Islands. They do not wear veils, and although they lead modest and retiring lives, and have a limited role in public affairs, they are not strictly secluded. Younger women do not generally appear in public during the day. Special sections are reserved for women in public places such as stadiums and mosques. In the past, many rulers of the Maldive Islands were women. Education on the primary and secondary levels is readily available to girls, and most attend school and attain at least basic literacy. Women share in many craft occupations with men.

Social Values

There are two principal value traditions in the Maldive Islands: The Islamic, and the native Maldivian. Over the centuries since Islam came to the islands, there has been a gradual Islamization of Maldivian traditions. But despite this trend, the Maldivians have kept their distinctive characteristics.

Generally speaking, the Maldivians are peaceful and orderly. The streets, public places, and private grounds are kept clean and neatly swept. Houses are tidy, and the people keep themselves clean. Violence is foreign to the Maldive Islanders. Serious crimes are rare, and judges reserve harsh penalties only for the worst offences, despite *shari'ah* provisions to the contrary.

The even tenor extends to other aspects of life as well. Moderation appears to be the unconscious axiom of existence. Wide variations of mood or behavior are not characteristic. Thus, the Maldivians, while pious and devoted Muslims, are not fanatics. Amusements and holidays share the same moderate character. Palm toddy, a mild alcoholic beverage, is made, but is not indulged in to excess.

Living Conditions

Despite the generally sanitary and neat style of life in the Maldives, there are a number of health problems. Water, obtained from shallow wells, is inclined to be brackish. Tending to accumulate in low places, it provides breeding places for mosquitoes. These pests are the vector for a variety of malaria known as Maldivian fever; it is debilitating, but not generally fatal. Other diseases include tuberculosis, leprosy, poliomyelitis, and filariasis. Venereal diseases, eye infections and various skin diseases are health problems.

Medical facilities are inadequate to their need. A dispensary located in Male since the 1920s now supplements a 42-bed hospital completed recently under the British Aid Program. Medical facilities at the Royal Air Force base on Gan Island were employed successfully to combat a typhoid epidemic on Addu Atoll in 1967.

As a member of the World Health Organization, the Republic is entitled to assistance in establishing and maintaining national health programs. In recent years WHO has provided the Maldives with expert advice and essential drugs to fight its endemic diseases. WHO has opened 10 remote health centers for the early diagnosis and treatment of malaria, filariasis, and intestinal diseases, it has provided training for anti-malaria and other public health campaigns, and it successfully treated a poliomyelitis epidemic on Male in 1967.

Medical personnel in the Republic have included Ceylonese doctors as well as Maldivian doctors and nurses. A current medical program includes the training of local midwives.

Most Maldivians, however, still must rely on the indigenous medical facilities. Magicians may be called upon to deal with diseases believed to be caused by spirit possession. Curers, called *hakims*, dispense herbal potions and amulets. There also are native bonesetters and midwives. Shops in Male and other business centers do a thriving trade in imported patent medicines.

Maldivians share in the regional cuisine. Highly seasoned sauces of meat, fish, or vegetables are served with rice. Pork is not eaten, and beef is rare because it must be imported. Poultry, eggs, and small livestock, such as goats, and especially fish are more usual. The rice must be imported, for it has not been possible to raise it on the islands. Tropical fruits and vegetables, such as breadfruit, coconuts, pineapples, and mangoes form a substantial part of the diet. Coconuts provide the basis for sweets and beverages.

Ordinary people live in houses made of local materials. The ubiquitous coconut tree provides timber, as well as leaves for thatch and fibers for mats. Throughout the 20th century, corrugated iron has become an increasingly popular, but uncomfortable, roofing material. The houses are fairly small, each set in its own compound, from which the women can watch what is happening outside. Those who can afford it build more substantial structures of brick or coral stone with tile roofs, imitating Arab, Ceylonese, or Western styles. Few houses have more than one story.

Clothing is well suited to the climate. Most men and boys wear sarongs wrapped around their waists and extending below the knee. With these are worn light shirts or undershirts, and occasionally jackets of Western style. Most of the cloth is imported from India, Ceylon, or Britain, and bright patterns and colors are favored. Head covering is optional, but many wear some sort of cap or headcloth. Most people wear shoes or sandals. Professional men, particularly those specializing in religion, often wear Arab-style long robes and turbans. Umbrellas protect against sun and rain and indicate rank. Most men are clean-shaven, except for religious leaders and pious old men.

Younger women wear bright gowns of lightweight cloth with long skirts, high waistlines, long sleeves, and high necklines with large collars. They wear their hair in long tresses partly covered by colorful veils. Little girls wear short frocks in Western style. The older women still prefer the old Maldivian style, which consists of a long striped skirt or sarong of heavy native cloth in a dark or neutral color. Over this is worn a longsleeved loose robe which reaches to the knees. The hair is gathered into a bun at the right side of the head and tied with a scarf. Women of all ages wear sandals or shoes, and whatever jewelry of gold, silver, or brass they can afford.

Islamic law and custom provide the only form of welfare assistance in the Maldive Islands. This is the *zakaat*, or obligatory almsgiving of at least two percent of one's income. Families also provide for needy relatives.

Recreation and entertainment are furnished by numerous preindustrial means. The professional story-teller is always popular, and musicians and dancers perform for special occasions. Amateurs also enjoy performing. Boys have a comic dance in which they grimace and twist to a band of drums and other percussion instruments. Other instruments found in the Maldives include old European brass trumpets, flutes, and double-reed instruments. Sports, such as football, and various games are also enjoyed. There is a football stadium in Male.

Rock music came to the islands in 1969 when a combo from Colombo entertained thousands of teenagers during a two week carnival celebrating Republic Day.

Holidays are Islamic. The major ones include the Great Feast, or Feast of the Sacrifice (*'Id al-Adah*), which commemorates both the sacrifice made by Abraham and the sacrifice made by the pilgrims at Mecca at that time; the *'Id al-Fitr*, Fast-Breaking Feast, which celebrates the end of the fasting month, Ramadan; and *Maulid an-Nabi*, or the birthday of Muhammad.

Creativity

Maldivian creativity is mainly channelled into the various crafts and into the religious professions. The mats, lacquer work, and lace are of high quality and many products are exported. The mosques and shrines are in a fine and simple style; one stands out. This is the Idu Miskit (Friday Mosque) on Male, built in the 17th century. Its minaret is a white two-tiered round tower decorated with Arabic inscriptions in Kufic, an ornamental Arabic script.

Education

There are two kinds of schools, the modern, and the traditional. The traditional system consisted of *kuttabs*, in which boys and girls learned to read, write, and recite the Qur'an. Advanced studies were available in Male in the *madrasah* attached to a mosque which specialized in religious studies and prepared students for careers as religious specialists. Students also attended Islamic universities abroad.

In 1964 there was one modern preschool, with fourteen teachers, all women, and 396 pupils, of whom 216 were girls. There were 162 primary schools, with 315 teachers and 4,864 pupils. Forty-seven percent of the elementary students were girls. There was one modern secondary school in Male, supported by the inhabitants. It had 19 teachers and 123 pupils, almost half of whom were girls. There were no facilities for special, vocational, or higher education, or for teacher training. Boys wishing higher education go to Colombo, Ceylon, where their government maintains a hostel for them and for which scholarships are available. In 1967 there were 117 students in schools abroad. Fifty of them were in Ceylon, 22 were in the United Arab Republic, 13 in Australia, 11 in India, 4 each in Canada, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, 3 in New Zealand, 2 each in Japan and the USSR, and one each in France and Sudan.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Government System

The Maldivian system of government is rooted deeply in Islamic traditions. Possibly to a greater extent than any other religion, Islam dictates the character of the non-religious institutions of a society that embraces the faith. Islam has a jural quality which regulates almost every aspect of the lives of the believers. It is a divine law, regarded as perfect, eternal, and just. Traditionally, the sole purpose of government in an Islamic society was the administration and enforcement of Qur'anic prescriptions.

The Maldivians have been Islamic since the 12th century, and although their society is non-Arabic, their governmental system reflects Muslim theory and custom in the affairs of state. The Maldives is not, however, a theocracy, and probably never has been. By the time the Delhi Sultanate was established (1206), the religious function of the caliph had virtually disappeared in the outlying Moslem communities.

In 1932, the Maldivian state adopted a written constitution following the practice of the Islamic countries of the Middle East earlier in the century. The necessary supporting legislative body was slow in developing, however, possibly because the Qur'an makes no provision for corporate organization.

Islamic history had no councils, no parliaments, and no representative assemblies. The principal of "majority decision" was not part of Islamic tradition. Also discouraging the introduction of an elective body into the Maldive government was the method of colonial rule exercised by the British. Some colonies were administered through a native civil service, others through indirect rule. The Maldives were ruled indirectly through Ceylon, and so received neither the ideas of representative government nor any experience in conducting one. The Maldives, governed as an hereditary sultanate from the 12th century, continued this classical form of Islamic autocracy during the era of British hegemony (1887–1965), except for a few months in 1953.

Shortly after World War II, the Islamic Middle East began a conversion to "republicanism," and, once again, the Maldives reflected their fellow-Muslims' interest in governmental change.

During 1953 the Maldives, Egypt, and Pakistan assumed the word "Republic" into their state titles. Within the next six years, the Sudan, Iraq, and Tunisia, became "republics." The Maldives reverted to a sultanate in August 1953, after a 7-month experiment in "republicanism." By 1961 the experiment was dead throughout the Islamic world.

The 1932 Maldive Constitution, like the 1953 "Republic" did not imply to the Maldivians the establishment of a representative, elective democracy. A republic, in Moslem terms, meant primarily the absence of a dynastic oligarchy; it did not include the European idea of universal suffrage.

In any case, the Maldivians quickly reinstated their sultan, and although the constitution was not abolished, neither was it activated. In 1964, an amended constitution was announced in anticipation of Maldivian separation from British administrative jurisdiction. The constitution provided that the Sultan, as Head of State, was to be elected by a special convention. The Prime Minister, as Head of Government was to be appointed by the Sultan on the advice of the 54-member legislative body called the *Majlis*. Of the 54, eight were to be appointed by His Majesty the Sultan, the remainder to be elected. The Cabinet was specified to consist of ministers, department heads, and the Attorney General, each appointed by the Prime Minister. The terms of office for the Prime Minister, the Cabinet members, and the *Majlis* was five years. Legislation produced by the *Majlis* was subject to ratification by the Sultan.

By national referendum, the Maldives became a republic again in 1968, with certain modifications also being made in the constitution. The country's official name was changed from Sultanate to Republic. A president was to be the chief executive, with a number of vice-presidents to be appointed by him. Provision was made for the continuation of the unicameral *Majlis*. The President is to be elected for a four-year term, members of the *Majlis* for five years. The *Majlis* elects the President.

Of the 54 members of the *Majlis*, Male, the capital, is allotted eight. Each of the other 19 administrative districts is allotted two. The President retains the right to appoint eight members of the *Majlis*, but it is not certain if this is the same eight who come from Male.

As of September 1, 1969, no appointments had been reported for the vice presidents' posts, but an eight-member Cabinet had been formed. In addition to the President, there were Ministers of External Affairs, Education, Agriculture and Fisheries, Health, Justice, Public Safety, Trade and Development, and the Attorney General. An Ambassador to the United States, and a Permanent

Representative to the United Nations (the same person) had also been selected.

The Legal System

The rationale and philosophy of the Maldivian legal code are largely derived from classical and idealized interpretations of the Qur'an. The Muslim world has long been aware, however, that although the Qur'an may serve well as a general frame of reference for deriving new laws, it is no longer sufficiently specific for the complexities of modern society.

Lawmaking in the Maldives, as it is in every Islamic country, is a process of converting Qur'anic precepts into more precise, legal, language. Legal decisions are made both by arguing from legal precedents, as in the West, and on the basis of analogy from traditional Islamic religious law.

Islam began in a society having no acknowledged political state. Religious law and social law were considered synonymous. All law, then, was assumed to be derived through divine revelation, and theological considerations weighed heavier than did worldly ones: in contrast to the European view, temporal law was not a condition separable from spiritual mandates.

As a 20th century national legislature, the *Majlis* must break with tradition by taking the lawmaking function out of the hands of Islamic judges (*qadis*), and by developing a method whereby contemporary social and economic problems can be dealt with on their own terms rather than on terms of 8th century theology. This, presumably, is what the Maldivians have intended ever since their first *Democratic Constitution* was proclaimed on December 22, 1932.

Under the 1968 Constitution, lawmaking is assigned to the *Majlis*, with the President holding veto power. Provision also is made for an office of Attorney General, but it is too early to tell what degree of success the Maldivians will have in modernizing their legal system.

The modernization process must be able to overcome what is loosely referred to as tradition, or "vested interests," and a social system which is more rigid in structure than it is in operation. The present-day Maldivians are, in part, descendants of Sinhalese Buddhists, who evidently shared the Pan-India caste system. Some observers have noted that there are castelike occupational divisions and other features of caste structure in the society (see Population and Labor Force in this chapter). Although the Qur'an clearly proscribes social class inequities, one of the many deviations from Arabic Islam is the perpetuation of caste-like social structures in those Indian societies accepting the teachings of the Prophet.

Whatever vestige or reflection of the Indian caste system remains in the 20th century Maldives, it will be certainly be a factor in converting the Republic's legal system from moral and ethical codes of medieval origin to political and fiduciary statutes of a contemporary congress. The caste system underlies the practice of occupational specialization, and will therefore tend to preserve existing occupations, and to discourage new ones. The traditional Maldivian lawmaker was schooled in the Qur'an. The future one will be trained in a wide variety of sources.

National Government

There are no heavy industry and no large commercial agricultural enterprises to complicate the government's regulatory and fiscal problems. There is no post office department (though the government issues stamps), no department of defense, no bureau of transportation, and no social security administration. The government of the Maldives is the government of a small, isolated, non-industrial society, presiding over a population which expects little in the way of public services.

Obviously, the Maldivian government performs more functions than would seem to be indicated by the titles of its eight ministries. The relatively simple structure of the government does reflect, however, a correspondingly unsophisticated society. For example, there is no direct taxation and no commercial banking system.

The Ministry of Education, established as a Cabinet post in November 1968, inherited a tradition of formal education that stressed philosophically-based moral and ethical values, to the detriment of what the Western world considers secular and "practical" knowledge.

Elementary and secondary education has for generations been considered best attained in Ceylon, where Sinhalese-speaking, and, ironically, Buddhistic teachers, predominated. The 400-mile trip from the Maldives to Ceylon, and the cost of a Ceylonese education precluded schooling to the majority of Maldivians.

The development of a secular public education system was well along by the 1960s. Education, beyond secondary level, and, special technical training were still largely obtained outside the islands, however (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

England's 1960 monetary grant to the Maldives, given in part for development of the islands' fishing industry, was in recognition of the crucial role that "processed fish" play in the Maldivian economy. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has the critical responsibility of assuring that domestic food-producing resources are fully exploited, and that the fish-export market is well supplied.

In meeting its responsibility, the programs of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries necessarily overlap those of other ministries. A proper food supply, in the Maldives, requires satisfactory trade relations with Ceylon, a sufficient variety of imported food to insure a balanced diet, and a clearly defined set of laws and regulations governing the fishing industry, both internally and internationally.

The Ministry of Health has its special province in public health. Western-trained doctors in the Maldives even as recently as 1970, were a rarity. Most Maldivians relied on their own knowledge of hygiene, and on native practitioners of folk-medicine, to maintain their health (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

Membership in the World Health Organization gives the Maldivian Ministry of Health access to the latest in scientific preventive and therapeutic medicine. The economic and demographic characteristics of the Maldives are such that WHO's contribution to the health of the islanders is made most significantly in the area of public health, rather than in supporting personal medical care. Individual medical services are impossibly expensive in the Maldivian economy, and the country's most urgent health problems are most efficiently solved through public means. At the time of Maldivian independence, the rate of population growth was too high for the nation's economic base, many diseases were widespread; there was unsupervised sale of imported patent-medicines; and, Maldivian custom relied on personal astrology, rather than on community action, to protect the health of the population (see Population and Labor Force in this chapter).

The Ministry of Health's most tangible asset is the hospital, built on Male from funds provided by Britain in 1960. Shortly after achieving independent statehood the Maldives began campaigns of public hygiene under the auspices of the World Health Organization. Other than mass vaccination, and health education, the government stated it lacked the resources to do more.

Distinctions between the functions and jurisdictions of the Ministries of Justice, Public Safety, and Attorney General are unclear. The Maldivian police force reportedly numbers about 500 men, stationed throughout the 200-odd inhabited islands.

The Ministry of Trade and Development, by the nature of Maldivian economics, has much the same area of responsibility as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The all-important export trade in fish, copra (dried coconut meat), coir (fiber of coconut husk), and handicraft products, offers the most likely potential for economic development in the Maldives.

Local Government

On each inhabited island of the Maldives, there is a *kateeb* (headman), and his assistant. Above them, in the administrative hierarchy, is the *atoll verin* (atoll chief). Each *atoll verin* is advised by an elected committee. It is the duty of the *kateebs* and *verins* to carry out national government policies and instructions, and to represent the needs of the local population to the Male authorities.

The national legislature (*Majlis*) has two members from each of 19 atolls, including the Male Atoll, within which is Male Island, the national capital. Each atoll is considered to be an administrative district.

Electoral System

The unicameral national legislature, the *Majlis,* is partly elected and partly appointed. The President of the Republic of Maldives, according to the 1968 Constitution, is authorized to select eight of the 54 *Majlis* members. The President is elected, in turn, by the *Majlis,* but the election must be confirmed by popular referendum.

Each inhabited island is administered by an officially appointed *kateeb,* who is advised by a locally elected committee.

There are no political parties in the Maldives. Differences in political goals are expressed through the interests of factions and personal alliances. The amended Constitution of 1964 gave women the right to vote in public elections, but denied them the privilege of holding a public office. New elections are expected to be held in 1974.

Political Dynamics

Political activity in the Maldives following their attainment of statehood in 1965, remained the politics of personal manuever among members of an elite. Not only were there no political parties, there were no public issues with which candidates for office identified themselves. Although the several ethnic and racial origins of the Maldivian population are discernible, no segment was sufficiently distinct to be a political entity. Even economic motives, which so commonly encourage differences in political opinion, were not compelling enough to create formal coalitions in the Republic.

The political situation in the Maldives became potentially more dynamic when the government was changed to a republican form in 1968. A president, elected to a four-year term, replaced the sultan who held the position for life. The creation of ministries made more official positions available than had previously existed.

Membership in the Colombo Plan gave the Maldives access to international economic development programs. As the nation's economy becomes more vigorous and diversified, interest in sharing the wealth will inevitably bring about increased political activity. The scheduled elections of 1974 will undoubtedly provide measurable evidence of the degree to which public interest and participation in national politics has changed since the days of the hereditary sultanate.

Public Information

In 1966 three papers were being published. There was a government daily, *Viyafaari Miyadu*; a private daily, *Fathis*; and a private weekly, *The Guardian.* In 1969, however, only the government daily was published. It had a circulation of 4,000. The news media are said to be free of government censorship.

There is one radio station, Radio Maldives, operated in Male by the government's Maldive Islands Broadcasting Service. The station recently installed a more powerful transmitter, and the reception of its broadcasts, in both English and Male, is said to have been improved. There is no television service.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Although the Maldives once were a British colony, they did not choose to join the Commonwealth of Nations when they became independent in 1965. They did join, however, the United Nations, the Colombo Plan, and the World Health Organization.

The economic, social, and medical benefits to be derived from membership in the Colombo Plan and in the World Health Organization clearly were needed by the new nation. The rationale for Maldivian diplomatic exchanges, on the other hand, is not apparent. Official relations have been established between the Republic of Maldives and the Republic of China, the German Federal Republic, India, Israel, the Republic of Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Arab Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and Ceylon. With the exception of Ceylon each handles its Maldivian affairs through its respective embassy in Ceylon. There are no embassies in Male itself.

The Maldives established an embassy in Washington, D.C., in 1968 but closed it on what was said to be a temporary basis in June 1970. The Maldivian Permanent Representative to the United Nations then served also as the ambassadorial representative to the United States.

Relations with Great Britain after independence rested primarily on the agreement permitting her a military airbase on Gan. During the early years of the Republic, Maldivian foreign relations were chiefly with the Colombo Plan nations and the World Health Organization for essentially the nonpolitical purposes of internal economic development, and improvement of the public health services. There were no mutual security pacts, no military alliances, and no special ties to any foreign power.

ECONOMY

Character and Structure

As might be expected of an island people, the chief industry is fishing which produces one of the staples in the Maldivian diet. Since the other staple, rice, will not grow in the Maldives, it must be imported, and dried fish is the principal commodity exchanged for it. The annual export value of Maldive fish accounts for 90% of total Maldivian exports.

National income statistics for 1967 show a Gross National Product of $8 million and a per capita income of $80. Annual government expenditure of over $3 million in 1966, considered together with an average wage of about $2.00 per week paid by the British air base on Gan island, probably the best wages in the economy, provide some idea of the level of economic development. Government programs of development have been initiated with the aid of funds from the United Kingdom. A number of Colombo Plan countries including United Kingdom, Ceylon, United Arab Republic, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, Australia, India, Pakistan, and France have provided technical training.

Fifty percent of the labor force is engaged in fishing; the remainder does handicraft work or some farming.

Fisheries

Although the most important industry is fishing, its organization and production is on a small scale, and it is limited technologically to local waters. Eight or more fishermen go into the surrounding rough seas in a large fishing boat. A smaller type craft carrying four to six men also is used. Fishing techniques are simple. Live sardines are cast into the sea as bait, and unbaited hooks and lines are used to pull in the fish. Government participation in a program of improvement and expansion of the fishing industry is financed by part of a grant from the United Kingdom, and may improve on these simple methods.

The chief catch is tuna and bonito which ranges from 3 to 10 pounds in weight. The fish are cut in pieces, slightly boiled, and smoked on racks made of bamboo erected over coconut wood fires.

Following the drying process, the fish are cut into smaller pieces, bagged in gunny sacks and exported to Ceylon. "Maldive fish" is used in Ceylon and India as a delicacy to be served as a supplement to curry and rice.

Fishing is vulnerable to various climatic factors. Since the industry uses sailing craft, the winds, currents, availability of bait, and other inputs can materially influence the output. The small sailing boats can operate only close to shore. Some of these problems might be solved by mechanization, as Colombo Plan experts have proposed. But local authorities are concerned that pollution and other consequences of modernization will adversely affect the fish upon which the economy depends so heavily.

Agriculture

Millet, corn, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, pineapples, sugar cane, and almonds are grown. In addition many kinds of tropical fruits and vegetables are cultivated. Coconut trees are important as sources of copra and coir. Coir making is second in importance only to fishing. Coconut wood is used in building houses, boats, and as fuel in the process of drying fish.

The northern and southern islands are more fertile than those in the central group, and the eastern islands tend to be more fertile than the western. Some cattle exist but their number is limited by the lack of fodder. Goats and chickens form the mainstay of animal husbandry.

In 1967 an agriculture specialist provided by the United Nations Development Program was working in Male on a rice cultivation project. The success of this project would reduce the islanders' need to import one of their staple foods. The government also plans to improve existing coconut plantations.

Industry

Fish processing and coir making are the most important industries in the islands. Maldivian coir, coconut fiber used for rope and matting, is prized for its light color, strength, and fine texture. As in fishing, the organization and technology of the coir industry are very simple. Other industries are handicrafts. Among these, lacemaking or handmade pillow lace is important. The techniques were introduced by the Dutch in the 17th century. Gold and silver thread imported from India is interwoven in some lace products. Lacquer work and finely woven mats are also famous handicrafts, which historically were offered as tribute to overlords in Ceylon. Woven mats come chiefly from the Suvadiva atoll which produces large quantities of rush.

Modern industrial possibilities appear to be minimal. There is a diesel-electric power plant in Male, but mineral resources are lacking. Tourism is a possible future industry, and the improved airport at Hulele may help to increase the number of visitors. There is no scheduled passenger service by air or water, however.

Labor

Except for the British air base on Gan Island, generally rural conditions of employment prevail. Fifty percent of the labor force is engaged in the fishing industry. Handicraft industries and farming provide occupations for the remainder. Construction and operation of the air base has provided work for hundreds of Maldivians. Airfield operations have provided employment for up to 500 Maldivians at an average wage equivalent to about $2.00 weekly.

In 1967 there was a shortage of skilled and unskilled labor caused by construction of buildings, roads, reclamation of land, and extension of the airfield at Hulele. Wages have tended to rise as a result.

Rural unemployment and underemployment characteristic of underdeveloped areas are absorbed in the family system. Islamic religious foundations care for those without family.

Banking and Currency

There are no banks, but a government trading company provides banking services. Foreign exchange accounts are generally held in Ceylon banks, and trade transactions are conducted through the Central Bank of Ceylon. Insurance company facilities are not available, and there is no organized trading in securities. Savings are held in cash or jewelry. The local monetary unit is the Maldivian rupee (MR). Its official value is equal to $0.17. Indian and Ceylon rupees are accepted as legal tender, but paper money is usually unacceptable. One local coin is the copper lari which is worth 0.08 Indian rupees. The boulari, a larger copper coin worth four times the lari, is the other local coin.

Public Finance

In 1961, government expenditures were put at the equivalent of $1.1 million increasing to $2.5 million in 1965, and $3.3 million in 1966. In addition to expenditures for its traditional functions, the government has planned a program of development to improve and expand the fishing industry, communications, and health services. A 5-year United Kingdom grant of $2.38 million has been gradually made available for financing these programs, and some assistance from Ceylon and other countries has been extended.

On the revenue side, taxation in the form of contributed labor is extracted from every able bodied man. The government imposes a duty of one bag in every twelve on imported rice, and one tin in every twelve on kerosene. Revenue from government monopolies is a source of income to the Government. Total revenue of the government in 1967 was $4.5 millions, of which 90% was derived from customs and stamps. Other sources of revenue are electricity charges, rentals or lease of islands, telecommunication, boat fees, and transport.

The United Kingdom has offered aid of approximately the equivalent of $2.38 million to the Maldives. The air base has been called a "bargain base." According to a prominent British political figure, its cost of operation over the 10-year period 1958–67, was only $15 millions. In 1967, however, the United Kingdom spent $11.5 million on the airfield and resettling the local population.

Domestic Trade

Organized trade has been in the hands of Ceylonese and Indian merchants, but the government now plays the major role in distribution. By transporting consumer goods throughout the islands and selling them at fixed prices, the Government has reduced profiteering by private traders. Male is a commercial as well as administrative center. Domestic trade merchants in that city are also in the export-import business. Maldivian products are exported chiefly to Ceylon and some important products entering the domestic trade of the country are imported. Among these are rice, salt, kerosene, oil, textiles, and manufactured products.

Foreign Trade

Maldive fish prepared from the bonito and tuna catch is the main export. It is sold only to the Government of Ceylon. The annual export value of Maldive fish was estimated at over $2.2 millions in 1968, which is by value well over 90% of total exports. The actual tonnage of fish exported in 1968 declined slightly from 1967, but the higher prices paid for the fish in 1968 caused a rise in the total value of exports (see table 2).

Coir, copra, cowrie shells, tortoise shell and local handicraft products also are exported. Ambergris is sold in Bombay, but most of the trade is with Ceylon. Most foreign trade is controlled by the government, and rice and salt imports and the export of ambergris are government monopolies.

Imports also increased steadily from 1966 to 1968, and a favorable balance of trade was maintained.

Trade with Ceylon is carried by buggalows (*bagalas*), which are wooden sailing craft similar to Arab dhows, averaging about 90

Table 2. Principal Exports and Imports of the Maldives, 1966, 1967, and 1968

	1966		1967		1968	
	Tons	Value	Tons	Value	Tons	Value
Exports[1]						
Maldive fish	2,882	1,498	3,521	1,863	3,402	2,201
Other varieties of dried fish and its products	1,320	223	1,078	127		
Copra	154	35	19	4		168
Coir rope and fibre	15	2	—	—		
Cowries, red stones, and tortoise shells	79	11	22	8		
Value of sterling pounds remitted in Ceylon	—	—	—	44		—
Total Value		1,769		2,046		2,369
Imports[2]						
Rice	—	683	—	974	—	n.a.
Wheat flour	—	62	—	98	—	n.a.
Sugar	—	195	—	293	—	n.a.
Textiles, drugs, luxury items and sundries	—	654	—	632	—	n.a.
Milk foods	—	—	—	3	—	n.a.
Total Value		1,594		2,000		2,003

n.a.—not available.

[1] In tons and thousands of U.S. dollars.

[2] In thousands of U.S. dollars.

Source: Adapted from *The Sixteenth Annual Report of the Consultative Committee, 1968: The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia*, Colombo, 1969; and *The Seventeenth Annual Report of the Consultative Committee, 1969: The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia*, Colombo, 1970.

feet in length and 120 tons in weight. In addition to the buggalows, there are steamers which ply the Ceylon-Male route, and some mechanized craft in inter-island service, the number of which is said to be increasing. A powered vessel taken from Taiwan fishermen for alleged poaching is now in service to Ceylon.

The United Kingdom granted $280,000 to the Maldives in 1960. At the same time the United Kingdom promised to provide $2.1 million over the next five years. Of this amount $840,000 was paid by 1965 to support development programs for improving health, fishing and shipping. The World Health Organization has aided various programs of public health, and the United Nations Development Program has provided an agriculture expert. Other foreign aid programs include a Colombo Plan grant from Ceylon of over $33,000 to help defray costs of improving the airport at Hulele. Japan has given fishing equipment (30,000 fish hooks in

1966 and 50,000 in 1970), and provides technical assistance in fishing and agriculture. In 1967, 117 students were trained in foreign countries under scholarships offered by various countries (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

NATIONAL SECURITY

Internal Security

The parochial nature of Maldivian society determines the way it defines crime, the size and jurisdiction of its police system, the punishment and treatment of prisoners, and its perception of dissident and subversive behavior.

The geography of the Maldive Archipelago discourages cosmopolitan attitudes. The population is scattered over an arced distance of almost 500 miles. The islands are 400 miles from Colombo, the nearest metropolitan area.

As a non-industrial, isolated, locally-oriented society, the Maldives have no strong tradition of a legalistic, impersonal code of law enforcement. Personal behavior is regulated by custom and sanction, in communities where everyone is acquainted with everyone else.

The degree to which personal loyalties may serve as a guarantee for social contracts is illustrated by one of the closing events in the "Suvadivan Rebellion" which occurred in the southern Maldives in 1959. For some years prior to the rebellion, the British military air base on Gan Island had given the local economy a noticeable advantage over the rest of the archipelago. When those who were not benefitting directly from the British presence attempted to deny the profits to those who were, the southern islands seceded and established the short-lived United Suvadiva Republic. When the rebellion was ended its leader, Abdallah Afif, was neither banished nor imprisoned. He was made an advisor to the Sultan.

Nevertheless, the Maldive government was not averse to also using force in quelling the 1959 uprising. A reportedly 500-man police force was supplemented by militia troops in a quick suppression of the only serious threat to internal security the Maldives has had since the 18th century.

External Security

In addition to the militia and police, there are sea forces patrolling the islands. The Republic, however, maintains no major defense forces. In fact, when it became independent in 1965 the Republic declined to join the British Commonwealth of Nations and thus it is not technically eligible to benefit from the collective security provided by the Commonwealth. The presence of the British military forces at Gan, however, may appear as an adequate shield to the Maldivians. On the other hand, they did not seek to extended the Gan Island agreement beyond 1968 when they reaffirmed the treaty in 1960.

The militia, the police, and the sea patrol of the Republic of Maldives were established for domestic security purposes, not for defense against hostile foreign forces. As the Maldives are not a member of the British Commonwealth, Britain is not responsible for the security of the islands, despite the presence of the air base.

CHAPTER 3

THE COLONY OF SEYCHELLES AND THE BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

Eleven hundred miles east of Africa and seven hundred miles northeast of Madagascar lies the British Crown Colony of Seychelles (see fig 3). The strategic location of the islands—in the center of the western Indian Ocean—was recognized in 1965 when the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) was created from outlying dependencies of Seychelles and of the former colony of Mauritius. The Seychelles consist of a core group of high-rising granitic islands and a far-flung group of low coralline atolls. The granitic Seychelles, including Mahé, Silhouette, Praslin and La Digue are situated in a thirty-five mile wide area and are inhabited by most of the colony's population. The coralline Seychelles include the Aldabra Islands and the nearby Cosmoledo Group, the Farquhar Group, and the Amirante Isles and support only a small number of temporary residents. When the BIOT was formed, Aldabra, Farquhar, and the Ile Desroches in the Amirantes were joined administratively with the Chagos Archipelago, 1,100 miles to the east. The Chagos Islands, formerly a dependency of Mauritius, are a southern extension of the grouping of coral atolls that comprises the Maldives and Laccadives. The BIOT is administered from Seychelles by the Governor of the Colony.

The geographic value of Seychelles is recognized by the United States which operates a satellite tracking station on Mahé. The United States also has a strategic interest in the BIOT. A fifty-year agreement with Great Britain provides for joint development of defense facilities on the islands. Of particular interest to the United States are the potential anchorage and communications facilities offered by the island of Diego García in the Chagos Archipelago.

Situated in the belt of tropical trade winds and surrounded by vast expanses of ocean, the Seychelles and the BIOT enjoy a more moderate climate than would normally be expected in locations so close to the equator. Temperatures range between 75° and 85° F. throughout the year. All of the islands lie outside the normal cyclone belt and high winds are rare. The fertile soils, abundant

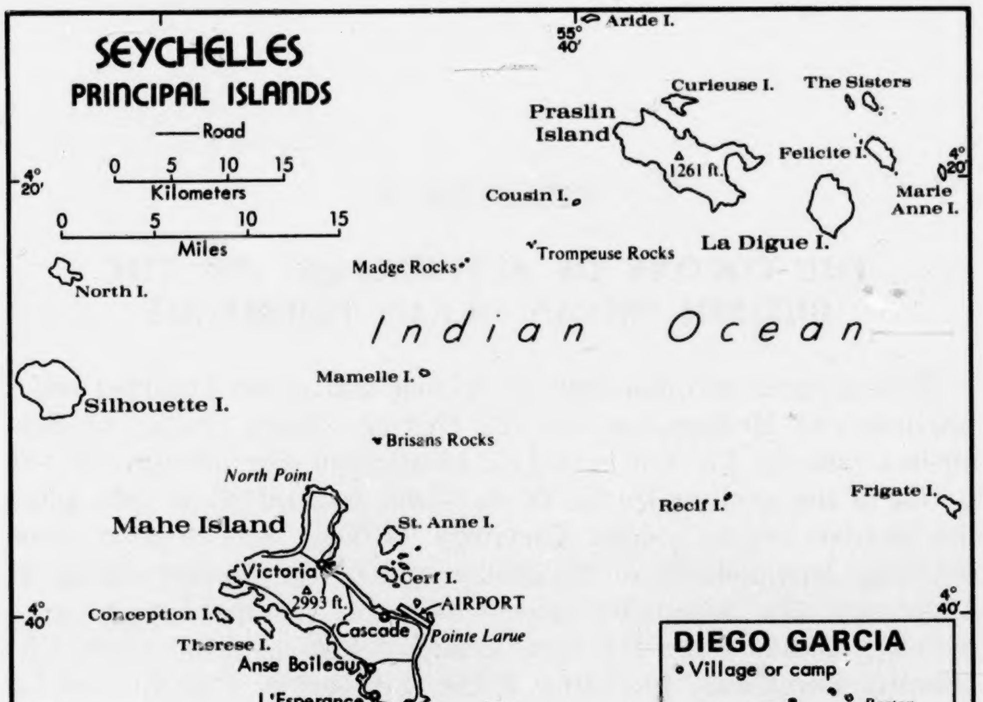
SEYCHELLES
PRINCIPAL ISLANDS
Road
0 5 10 15
Kilometers
0 5 10 15
Miles
Aride I.
55° 40'
Curieuse I.
The Sisters
Praslin Island
1261 ft.
Felicite I.
4° 20'
Marie Anne I.
Cousin I.
La Digue I.
Trompeuse Rocks
Madge Rocks
North I.
Indian Ocean
Mamelle I.
Silhouette I.
Brisans Rocks
North Point
Recif I.
Frigate I.
Mahe Island
St. Anne I.
Victoria
Cerf I.
2993 ft.
AIRPORT
4° 40'
Conception I.
Cascade
Pointe Larue
Therese I.
Anse Boileau
L'Esperance
Anse Royal
1241 ft.
55° 20'
Cap Malheureux
55° 40'
DIEGO GARCIA
Village or camp
Barton Point
Eclipse Bay
Rambler Bay
East Point
0 5 10 Kilometers
0 5 10 Miles
50°
60°
BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY
0 200 400 600
Kilometers
0 200 400 600
Miles
0°
Seychelles
Mahe I.
Amirantes Is.
Desroches I.
Chagos Archipelago
Diego Garcia
British Indian Ocean Territory
Aldabra Is.
Farquhar Is.
10°
Comoro Is.
Indian Ocean
Madagascar
MALAGASY REPUBLIC
50°
60°
70°

Figure 3. Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory.

vegetation and fresh water streams of the rugged granitic Seychelles have been particularly inviting to human settlement. Small communities exist on some of the low coralline Seychelles and in the atolls of BIOT, but the inhabitants are temporary contract workers on the coconut plantations or the guano deposits rather than permanent settlers.

The population of Seychelles totaled about 51,000 persons in early 1971 and was increasing rapidly. A high birth rate and long life expectancy threaten to outstrip the combined resources of the local economy and external aid. Neither emigration nor birth control offer satisfactory solutions, and economic development potentials are severely limited.

About eighty percent of the people live on the largest island, Mahé. Most of them are of mixed origins—descendants of European settlers, African slaves, and Indian laborers. Seychelles was a French colony before it became British: the people speak Creole—a local combination of French and African languages—and are Roman Catholic. Social distinctions are based on skin color, wealth, life style and family reputation. A very small white elite exists, but there are no significant ethnic or regional divisions within the society.

The household is the basic social unit. It is comprised of a couple and their children. Although the couple often is not legally married, their household is a fairly durable institution.

Seychellois values are based primarily on the European model, and there is much concern with the display of material wealth. The scarcity of jobs, however, makes the asquisition of property difficult, and social pressure to share jobs, when they are available, leads to underemployment.

Since 1948 when the first elections were held, the government of the colony has been evolving on the British parliamentary pattern. Although civil law is still based on Napoleonic codes, criminal law has been British since 1952, and commercial law is becoming Anglicized. There are two political parties which differ primarily regarding the appropriate link with the Crown.

The coconut is king of the Seychelles economy. Coconuts and their byproducts are the principal exports, but they do not earn enough to permit the colony to be self-sufficient. More than $10 million has been spent from Commonwealth funds to provide basic economic assistance, and another $10 million will have been spent on a jet airport when it is completed in 1971. It is hoped that tourism will provide a substantial amount of revenue. There also is opportunity to develop the fishing industry.

Physical Environment

The Seychelles consist of 90 to 100 islands scattered across 150,000 square miles of ocean between 4° and 11°S latitude and roughly between 50° and 60°E longitude. The count on the total number of islands varies depending upon what is considered an island. Some are merely sand cays and shoals barely above the high tide mark. The granitic Seychelles are generally conceded to include thirty-two islands; the remainder are in the coralline group. The total land area of the Seychelles is about 100 square miles, of which 87 square miles are contained in the granitic group.

General Characteristics

Mahé is the largest island in the granitic Seychelles. It is seventeen miles long and three to five miles wide and constitutes a little more than half—fifty-five square miles—of the total land area. The other granitic islands, all within thirty-five miles of Mahé, include Praslin, La Digue, Silhouette, Curieuse, Felicité, Frigate, Bird, Cousin and Cousine, and a number of smaller islets and isolated rocks. Their coconut palms, white sand beaches, and great scenic beauty conform to the popular conception of idyllic "South Sea islands."

The total population of Seychelles is estimated to be about 51,000, of which eighty percent is on Mahé. The rest is divided mainly between Praslin and La Digue.

The general appearance of the islands is one of cleanliness, with a swept look and a lack of litter. There are few domestic animals other than chickens, pigs, and a few cats. The more substantial housing in the islands is generally constructed of coral rock, with lesser grades built of mud, wattle, and palm thatch.

Settlement Patterns

Victoria, on the northeast coast of Mahé, is the administrative capital of Seychelles and the only town in the islands. Within its environs live a quarter of the Seychelles population. Rural settlement on Mahé is distributed along either side of the roads, with density heaviest along the northeast coast in the vicinity of Victoria and lightest in the central highlands. Small fishing villages are located along the coasts, usually near the heads of small bays and coves. Typical structures visible along these sheltered stretches of the waterfront are boat sheds. Most tourist and resort facilities are concentrated along the Glacis (northwest) coast, with some development planned for the windward southwest coast in the vicinity of Anse La Mouche. The island is adequately served by a road network that circles the island and provides a number of connecting links across the high central ridge. Fifty-five of the seventy-five miles of road on Mahé have been tarmac-surfaced.

The vegetation on Mahé is lush and tropical, largely replaced in coastal areas with plantations of coconut and some cinnamon. In an attempt to diversify the islands' dependence on copra as an export commodity, tea plantations have been started on the higher slopes behind Victoria.

More extensive diversification of the islands' economy for tourism is dependent upon completion of an international airfield under construction at Anse Larue. The jet-length runway, composed almost entirely of coral rock fill, extends out across a 250-acre area of shallow reef. It is oriented parallel to the northeast coast from Pointe Larue toward Victoria Harbor. Much of the coral fill is obtained from dredging and deepening operations near Victoria Pier in the harbor area.

A second vital project to the island is the building of the Rochon Dam in the hills behind Victoria. The reservoir impounded by the dam will insure a properly treated and adequate water supply for the town and its environs and relieve the water shortage that can occur at the end of the drier season in September.

Praslin, the second largest island in the granitic Seychelles, has a population of about 4,000. There are several villages along the northeast coast that are connected by a road that continues around to the eastern part of the island to the Vallée de Mai. The Vallée de Mai is a government reserve for the preservation of the coco-de-mer, unique species of coconut palm. The reserve, forty-six acres of lush dark primary forest, is expected to become a major tourist attraction in the islands. Settlement is coastal and is associated with coconut groves and plantings of vanilla. On Praslin there are four miles of tarmac road and twenty miles of earth roads.

La Digue nearby to the east of Praslin has a permanent population of about 2,000. It, too, has a settlement pattern that reflects the main occupation of the islands, the growing of coconuts. There are eight miles of earth road on La Digue.

The coralline Seychelles are a wide arc of atolls located generally to the southeast and southwest of Mahé. They are largely undeveloped except for the use of some of the islands as coconut plantations; three islands still have reserves of guano deposits. There is a scattered population of approximately 1,500.

British Indian Ocean Territory

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is an arbitrary administrative grouping of three coral atolls in the Seychelles—

Aldabra, Desroches in the Amirantes, and Farquhar, plus the Chagos Archipelago. Aldabra is a wildlife refuge; the others have been leased as coconut plantations, or guano quarries. The territory has no permanent residents.

The primary value of the BIOT is strategic. Aldabra has one of the few sites in the Indian Ocean islands suitable for the construction of a modern jet airfield. But vigorous international protests by scientists on behalf of the unique ecological character of the island, and cuts in the defense budget required by devaluation of the pound led the government to drop the airfield proposals in November, 1967. The other BIOT islands have good natural harbors for the development for naval facilities. For example, the Chagos atoll of Diego García surrounds a lagoon that is fifteen miles long, four miles wide and about thirty feet deep. The island itself offers a site for the construction of communications, support, and air facilities.

Transportation and Communication

Communications between Seychelles and the outside world is rudimentary. Scheduled monthly to bi-monthly shipping services connect Mahé with Mombasa, Bombay, Beira, and Durban. Auxiliary sailing schooners based at Victoria maintain infrequent contact with the out islands. Ferry service, however, connects Mahé with Praslin and La Digue three times a week.

Cable and wireless communications are available through Africa and Aden. On Mahé there is an automatic inland telephone system which had 578 subscribers in 1969. There is also a radio telephone link between Mahé and the islands of Praslin and La Digue.

Population and Labor Force

The salient fact about the population of Seychelles is its rapid increase, especially in relation to economic resources and social services. In the later 1960s, limited emigration and hopes raised by the construction of an airport on Mahé offered little promise for amelioration (see Economy in this chapter). The level of education in the population did not augur success for projected birth control programs. The division of labor more or less follows traditional lines and reflects the agricultural bias of the economy.

The islands constituting the British Indian Ocean Territory had no permanent population prior to the Territory's founding in 1965. Instead, workers from Mauritius and Seychelles would come with their families to work on contract on the copra estates, or in the guano extraction and turtle hunting industries.

Population Structure

The 1960 Seychelles population census found 41,425 inhabitants: this figure included the population of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches Islands which were later detached in the formation of the BIOT. According to United Nations figures, the latest estimate, July 1969, for the population was 51,000. This represented an increase of 1,000 from midyear 1968.

Although similar in size of surface area to the coralline islands, the granitic Seychelles had a much greater population because of greater access to water and other resources. In 1960 Mahé and its satellites had 33,478 inhabitants, about four-fifths of the population. Praslin had 3,886 inhabitants, while La Digue had 1,842 and Silhouette had 780, completing a total of 39,986 for the population of the granitic islands, whose area was 87 square miles. The coralline islands, with an area of seventy-five square miles had only 1,439 inhabitants; few of these were permanent residents.

In the granitic islands in 1960, there were 10,504 persons in urban areas; this was about one-fourth of the population. The remaining 29,482 were rural. Towns were not held to be overcrowded. The overall population density was 460 per square mile. This increased to 600 for Mahé, the chief island. La Digue had a density of 461, Praslin 259, and Silhouette 98. The average density of the coralline islands was nineteen persons per square mile.

Women exceeded men in the granitic Seychelles, but were less numerous in the coralline islands. In the latter, there were 943 males, and 496 females; these proportions reflect the transient nature of the population there. Urban life in the granitic islands tended to favor women; there were 5,641 women and 4,863 men in urban areas, but 14,999 women and 14,483 men in rural areas. The overall excess of women over men, 21,136 to 20,289, has been true of the Seychelles only since 1921, when an influenze epidemic appears to have decimated the male population.

In 1960, thirty-nine percent of the population was under fifteen, while fifty-five percent was in the working years of fifteen to sixty-four, and the remaining six percent was sixty-five or older. In the population under fifteen, 8,169 were male and 7,765 were female. Of those aged fifteen to sixty-four, 10,046 were male and 11,831 were female. In the group aged sixty-five and over, there were 1,074 males and 1,540 females. The high figure for youth dependency suggests the great pressures on educational resources and presages increased problems in the fields of public and social services, and employment.

The total population of the BIOT was slightly over 1000 in mid-1968, with about four-fifths of that number distributed on

The Chagos Archipelago. This population is still transient, composed of contract workers from Mauritius and Seychelles.

Population Dynamics

The Seychelles were uninhabited when first discovered in the 16th century by Europeans. In 1700 the French settled twenty-two persons on one of the small islands near Mahé. In 1778, 15 more men were sent to the Seychelles. A report of 1785 listed 158 inhabitants; this figure apparently did not include dependents of European settlers. By 1790, there were almost 600 persons.

Chevalier Jean Baptiste Quéau De Quincy, alternately French and British Commandant of Seychelles, made a census in 1803–1804, finding 2,121 inhabitants. By 1810 there were 3,467 on Mahé, and by 1825, 6,963.

The British abolition of slavery in 1834 tended, on the whole, to increase the population. Although several thousand settlers left with their slaves in order to escape emancipation, thousands of Africans liberated from slave ships were settled in the Seychelles. This settlement ended large-scale migration to the islands. Since the 1870s, a few Indians and Chinese have come to exploit the commercial potential of the colony, and in the mid-20th century, small numbers of elderly Britons have immigrated to retire. By 1950, there were around 36,000 Seychellois.

In 1968 1,738 births were registered, making a rate of 34.8 per thousand. In the same year, 538 deaths were registered, at a rate of 10.8. The rate of natural increase was thus 24.0. The infant mortality rate was 48.9, based on the registration of 85 infant deaths.

No reliable figures exist for migration, either within or without the colony. There has been a trend toward migration into Victoria, the capital, since around 1900 when plant disease reduced vanilla cultivation. Workers have also migrated on a periodic basis to the outlying coralline islands. Seychellois also migrate, either temporarily or permanently, to more distant areas. In 1967, there were 2,460 arrivals and 2,133 departures.

Seychellois and foreign demographic experts alike hold the overpopulation of the Seychelles to be acute. Although the rate of growth is not as high as that in many other countries bordering the Indian Ocean, the economic resources are already insufficient to support the population; Great Britain must supply aid, and the population growth continues to outstrip economic development.

Proposed solutions to the population problem fall into three categories. The first of these is economic development, at which a start has been made, despite heavy odds (see Economy in this chapter). The second of these is emigration. It is unlikely that this solution will afford much relief. Potential recipient countries may pose limitations as to skills and occupations; few Seychellois have desirable skills. Also, many countries have numerical limitations on immigrants.

The third solution is birth control. In 1965 the services of a population planning expert were engaged, and family planning services began to be made available to the people. Ignorance of effective techniques and the social values associated with rural poverty, however, constituted major barriers to an effective birth control program.

Labor Force

Around 19,000 persons were economically active in 1967. Of these, 3,250 were employed by the government, many of them in temporary projects. Over 5,000 were employed on plantations, and around 2,150 in other private enterprises. The unemployment rate was around 8 percent in 1960.

Less than 40 percent of the labor force possesses some skill, accounting for the high unemployment rate which co-exists with a labor shortage in some industries. Many more workers are underemployed.

About 30 percent of the workers in urban areas are unskilled; the proportion rises to around 60 percent in the countryside where they can find agricultural work. Artisans, domestics, and white collar workers are concentrated in urban areas, while the many landholders inhabit their small properties in the country.

Women constitute around 40 percent of the labor force, both in rural and urban areas. Men and women share many occupations; about equal numbers of both are small landholders. Domestic service, laundry, basketry, and sewing are largely feminine prerogatives, while few women are found as fishers, plantation administrators, artisans, police, fire fighters, or toddy tappers.

Most occupations are learned from parents or other relatives. The educational system trains teachers, other white collar workers, and some skilled workers (see Culture and Society in this chapter). The government also operates a small scale apprenticeship program.

ETHNIC GROUPS, LANGUAGES, AND RELIGION

In contrast to the neighboring Mascarene Islands, Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) have relatively homogeneous populations. Nearly all of the inhabitants are of mixed European and African origin, and most of them profess Roman Catholicism. Minority groups are small and occupy a special place in the occupational structure.

Historical Background

The ethnic composition of the population has remained fairly consistent since the original settlement of the islands. The first group of settlers was made up of small numbers of Europeans, Africans, and South Indians; the second group of settlers was apparently all European. The European component included both planters and entrepreneurs, who had come voluntarily, and exiles and convicts. Africans who came to the Seychelles were brought as slaves for the plantations. Subsequent unions resulted in the largely mixed European and African population which characterized Seychelles by the twentieth century. The small Indian and Chinese minorities did not begin to arrive until the 1870s.

The French settlers brought with them their Roman Catholic faith; this was adopted by the Africans. Because of the isolation and neglect of Seychelles, no priest was sent to the islands until 1851. In 1853 a Roman Catholic Mission was established, and Seychelles became a diocese in 1890. The British sent an Anglican chaplain in 1832, and another in 1840. Although the Church of England established the first missions, the population has remained Catholic because of loyalty to France, and because the British had agreed when they acquired the Colony not to impose their customs on the Seychellois. Other Protestant groups, notably the Seventh Day Adventists, have established small nuclei in the islands. Many of the Indians and Chinese have retained their own religions. The Africans who came to Seychelles brought remnants of their religious beliefs and practices.

Ethnic Groups

Persons of mixed African and the European origin, called Creoles, comprise the majority of the population. A small group of wealthy whites prides itself on its supposed pure French ancestry. Other whites in Seychelles are British colonial administrators, experts and retired persons.

Other minorities are the Indians and Chinese, who number only a few hundred, and who monopolize the retail and import-export trade. The Indians tend to remain exclusive, but the Chinese freely intermarry with the Creoles.

Relations between the various ethnic communities are generally free of tensions, but light skin, approximating the European ideal, is more valued than dark, which is associated with slave ancestry. Persons with light skin tend to enjoy a more favorable socio-economic status than those with darker skins and are more often found in white-collar occupations.

Languages

English is the official language of the Colony. French has the most prestige, but Creole is the mother tongue of most Seychellois.

In the 1960 census, 38,841 persons admitted to speaking Creole as their native language. Creole, rarely a written language, is a creation of native Seychellois based on a simplified French syntax and borrowings from various African languages. It is a sufficient and expressive vehicle of communication.

Fewer than 2,000 persons claimed to speak French. It is the language of all those who aspire to social status. The newspaper *Le Seychellois* is published alternately in French and English, and there is also an agricultural journal published in French. The Seychelles Society and other intellectual or artistic organizations conduct most of their affairs in French.

Native speakers of English were fewer than 400; therefore accommodations have to be made to linguistic realities. Although English is supposed to be the official medium of instruction in the schools, the children begin with Creole, gradually change to French, and finally learn English. Judicial proceedings and dealings with the bureaucracy must also involve at least two languages. Since the 1940s and the beginning of increased British interest in the Colony, inhabitants of Seychelles have begun to appreciate more the value of English. Colonial authorities hope to make English the spoken language of the Colony

Various other languages were spoken by about 200 persons. Chinese, Gujarati and Tamil (Indian languages) were the more numerous of these.

Religion

In 1960, 37,567 persons or about ninety percent of the population were Roman Catholic. About eight percent were Protestant, mostly belonging to the Church of England. Hinduism, Islam, and Seventh Day Adventism each claimed fewer than 200 adherents. Buddhism and other Asian religions were professed by a few.

The cathedral of the Seychelles Diocese is at Victoria on Mahé. Since 1922, Swiss Capuchins have been in charge. Until the 1940s, the Catholic Church had a virtual monopoly on education, and it still plays an important role in this field (see Culture and Society in this chapter). The Bishop for the Anglicans has his see in Mauritius.

Church membership and adherence to religious ideals are important determinants of status. Sunday Mass is enjoyed as a social event, in which people can visit and display new clothes. Holy days are celebrated with processions and parties.

Despite their religious adherence, most Seychellois regard the

Church as a foreign institution. Although efforts are being made to recruit Seychellois for the priesthood, most of the clergy are still foreign. The people also feel that Church teachings are remote from their own existence; Catholic practices, for example, offer no method for keeping a job or wreaking vengeance.

Not only do people fail to follow Church precepts on such matters as marriage, but they also subscribe to numerous supernatural beliefs which are contradictory to Catholic teaching. They fear spirits of the night, called *gris-gris,* and zombies. They resort to magicians and conjurers, called *bonshommes* and *bonnes femmes de bois,* who attempt to cure illness, prepare love potions, and cast positive and negative spells. Such practices were outlawed in 1958, and the clergy have preached against them for many years, but their persistence seems likely until economic and social conditions are improved

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The Seychelles constitute a more or less uniform society, without deep regional or ethnic divisions. The inhabitants think of themselves as Seychellois, as possessors of a unique culture.

Factors other than the cultural make Seychelles more like other tropical underdeveloped countries with a history of colonialism. Among these may be included the enervating climate, the poverty of natural resources, the high birth rate aggravated by modern controls over disease, the low level of education and skills, the insufficiency of public services and economic institutions, and the isolation and long neglect of the colony.

Social Structure

Following the economic criteria of wealth and occupation, there are two major classes: a small class of wealthy landholders and businessmen, and a much larger class of workers and farmers. Between is a small but growing class of small landholders, government workers, and white collar workers.

Other factors combine with the economic to produce the system of social stratification. These include skin color, material possessions and style of life, and family reputation. Seychellois take great interest in the intricacies of the system and in the classification of other persons within it. Thus, *nouveaux riches* (new rich) are distinguished from *anciens riches* (old rich), poor *blancs* (whites) from poor *noirs* (blacks), and the landless from the equally poor small landowners.

Education is a means whereby the poor can rise into the middle class, preferably as teachers or civil servants. It is also one of the ways in which the elite maintain their prestige. To rise into the upper class requires wealth, but this is not easily acquired. Few Creoles can earn much more than a subsistence level of income, and even the enterprising few who aspire to greater wealth are often held back by the necessity of helping out friends and relatives. Color is not an absolute bar to elite status, but no Indians or Chinese have been admitted to the small circle.

Rural and urban areas differ in the proportions of occupations, and hence in distribution of socio-economic classes (see Population and Labor Force in this chapter). The middle and upper classes tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

Family

Social anthropologists who have studied the Seychelles have found the household to be the basic unit of society. Marriage is the ideal form of union. It is not always achieved because of the expense of the wedding and accompanying festivities. Other reasons may involve differential prestige of the potential spouses, a mother's wishing to retain the earnings of her son, a previous marriage of one of the partners, and the relative scarcity of men.

The more or less stable form of non-legal union is known as living *en ménage*. Frowned upon by church and civil authorities, no other stigma is attached to it except in elite circles. A *ménage* may last for many years, or it may be of short duration, depending on the compatability and financial condition of the partners. *Ménage* shades into less durable unions, such as a woman being supported by a man who occasionally visits her, the compliance of maids with their employers, or casual unions made with the hope of some small gift. In both marriage and *ménage* greater fidelity is expected of women than of men.

A household typically consists of a couple and their children. Children may be adopted or fostered from deceased or impoverished friends or relatives. In some instances other adults are included in a household.

Close ties exist between mothers and children, and between siblings. Children are generally loved and wanted, although attempts are sometimes made at abortion or contraception. The relationship between the parents, leaning heavily on economic necessity, is often not close. Children tend to acquire their mother's attitude toward their father. In-law relationships, particularly that of a woman with her mother-in-law, are apt to be cool.

Because most Seychellois are Catholic, marriage rarely terminates in divorce; death, desertion, or voluntary separation end most marriages and *ménages*. Both marriages and *ménages* are initiated by the couple involved; in higher status groups, families may exercise considerable pressure on the choice of a suitable spouse.

Social Values

Values in Seychelles derive from European (and to a degree African) traditions, and from the history and economic conditions which characterize the islands. The ideal traditions tend to be modified by the realities of Seychelles life.

Interpersonal relations in general demonstrate a concern with prestige and ostentation; here, the great interest in clothing and in family reputation are evident. Owning land and household furnishings, and conspicuous public spending bring prestige.

The intermittent conditions of employment and the values placed on conspicuous consumption cause many Seychellois to spend beyond their means, even skimping on food.

Living Conditions

The diet is insufficient in protein, and sometimes in quantity. Rice, the staple, is eaten with curries of lentils or vegetables, and occasionally fish. Local fishing barely meets the demand, and fish are expensive. Few cattle are raised, and beef is imported. Chickens and their eggs, and giant tortoises and their eggs, supplement the protein intake. Rice must be imported, and the locally grown breadfruit substitutes as starch when rice is scarce. Sugar is also imported. Fruits and vegetables are grown locally. The cuisine is influenced by French and British Indian styles.

A variety of alcoholic beverages is made and consumed. *Bacca*, a sort of beer, is made from sugar cane juice. Toddy is created as the sap from a coconut palm is made to drip into a container and ferment. The manufacture and sale of *bacca* and toddy are regulated by the government; consequently *bacca* is drunk at parties, but toddy in relative solitude. *La purée* is made from anything that will ferment.

Seychellois take great pride in their clothing and other material possessions. Clothes are neat and clean, in European style, and people feel ashamed if they do not have attractive clothes to wear, especially for special occasions. Every woman has her *robe la messe* (dress for Mass) and *chapeau la messe* (hat for Mass) which she displays after church on Sunday.

Houses are also kept in order, but may be stuffed with the furniture, particularly chairs, which are valued as symbols of economic achievement and used as gifts. Furnishings are simple, and involve ingenious use of local materials.

Most houses are made of wood or fiberboard with an iron roof. Many, especially in the country, are made of thatch. A smaller number are more substantially constructed of concrete or coral blocks. Most dwellings are on stone foundations. City houses are constructed with large stone steps in front. Even in the most congested sections, houses have yards, and often fences, around them, in which children and small animals roam. Despite interior neatness, house facades tend to be unkept. The government has been promoting housing projects, partly to stem the flow from countryside to city.

The major health problems appear to be tuberculosis, venereal disease, and intestinal parasites. Leprosy and malnutrition constitute lesser problems. The usual tropical diseases such as malaria are nearly non-existent. The death rate, around 10.0 per thousand, is low for tropical countries. In 1960 the life expectancy for males was around sixty-one years, and for females sixty-six years.

Seychellois tend to attribute illness to spirit possession, but they will go first to a doctor if one is available. Health care and public health programs are adequate. A general hospital is located in Victoria with over 150 beds and surgical facilities. Smaller hospitals are located in Anse Royale on Mahé and on Praslin and La Digue. The World Health Organization conducted a tuberculosis survey in 1961, and a sanatorium was opened in 1964. There are several outpatient clincs, and two dental clinics. There is a leprosarium on Curieuse, and the government also runs a clinic for venereal disease. A small mental hospital exists on Mahé. The government-run ante-natal and maternity facilities are popular. Except for plantation dispensaries, the smaller islands have no medical facilities, but the government operates a medical launch for emergencies.

One doctor is available for every 3,000 persons. Government expenditures on medical services constitute about fifteen percent of the budget. In addition to the hospitals and clinics, these include lunches and dietary supplements for school children, and health examination programs in the schools.

The government operates homes for the aged and infirm in Victoria and in Anse Louis. It also grants welfare to those who need it; the number on relief is low, but increasing. There is a small-scale government-operated public housing scheme. The Roman Catholic Mission organization is active in welfare and social work, and provides a home for many of the illegitimate children. Social values encourage the aiding of needy kin and neighbors; these small grants often enable a family to manage without applying for public assistance.

Church holidays, weddings, and funerals are the chief occasions for social gatherings. They are celebrated by boisterous feasting and dancing. Sometimes, individuals organize public dances for profit. There are three public cinemas, but the admission fees are considered high, and most prefer drinking and dancing. Dominoes is a favorite game.

Creativity

The Creoles have developed a rich body of proverbs and tales, but little research has been carried out on Seychellois folklore. There are some handicrafts, and folksongs, seemingly based on old French sources, but the chief artistic outlet of the Creoles is the dance. The elite have retained some of the old French formal dances, but the dance of ordinary people shows African origins. The *moutia,* a dance similar to the *sega* of Mauritius and Réunion, is accompanied by drums; banned in Victoria, the dance involves sexual symbolism, and *moutia* parties generally become disorderly. More sedate is the *camtolée,* a sort of square dance.

The only notable buildings are the Government House and the Romand Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Arthur Savy, an artist with a semi-representational style, lives on Praslin.

The better educated seek the facilities of the Seychelles Society and the Alliance Française for recreation and entertainment. The Seychelles Society, an intellectual club founded in 1960, sponsors lectures and publishes a journal, *Le Seychellois.* The Salle d'Oeuvre Théâtre houses plays, operas, and concerts produced by local amateurs, and the Seychelles Theater Club presents plays in French and English. There are seven public libraries, including a Carnegie Library in Victoria, and one in the Seychelles Club, an elite Social club. There are also four school libraries. The Alliance Française serves as an output of French culture.

Education

Education is not compulsory, but about eighty percent of the children attend. Until 1947, development of public education was hindered by debate over the language of instruction, and the Catholic Church had a virtual monopoly on education. By 1970, education was available on the primary and secondary levels, in vocational training, and in teacher training. The churches still played an important role in education.

There are twenty-two pre-school institutions, all of them private, with an enrollment in 1966 of 453. In 1970, there were thirty-four primary schools, with an enrollment of 8,795. Information available for 1968, regarding thirty-one schools, indicated that nineteen of these were Roman Catholic, seven Church of England, one Seventh Day Adventist, two on private estates, and two government. Primary education is free. The government provides lunches for poor children, and aids the church schools.

Pre-school education is available for children aged five to six years. From the ages of six to twelve, children attend primary school. The junior secondary is a two-year course, and the vocational program lasts for three years. The teacher training and secondary grammar courses last for five years.

Following educational reforms in 1965, the secondary program, which is free, was divided into three streams. There are two secondary grammar schools which offer an academic program. One of these is the Seychelles College, for boys, and the other, Regina Mundi, is a Roman Catholic school for girls. In 1970, 485 students were enrolled on this level. The junior secondary schools provide additional academic training for those students who go on into the vocational programs. In 1970, there were eleven of these, with an enrollment of 1,436.

There were three vocational schools, with an enrollment of 235 in 1970. Teacher training was offered on the secondary level, with an enrollment of fifty in the new Teacher Training College. The government awards scholarships for higher education abroad, in English speaking countries; thirty-nine students were in Britain in 1968.

In 1968 colony expenditures on education amounted to about $486 thousand. Over $252 thousand in Commonwealth Development and Welfare funds was also spent on education, mostly on buildings for the Teacher Training College.

The language problem continues to hinder education (see Ethnic Groups, Languages, and Religion in this chapter). Additional handicaps are posed by the high birth rate and limited economic development. Nevertheless, progress in education has been made. The 1960 Census found a literacy rate of less than fifty percent among adults, many of whom must patronize professional letter-writers, but a rate of about seventy-six percent among children aged five to fourteen. A shortage of primary teachers continues, aggravated by the poor quality of the teacher training college and level of student preparedness. Government efforts and the high prestige placed on the teaching profession should do much to alleviate this situation.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Governmental System

Colonial Status and Self-government

Seychelles became part of the British Empire when it was captured from the French during the Napoleonic wars. After almost a century of being an appendage to Mauritius, another formerly French-held island, Seychelles was given the status of a Crown

Colony in 1903. Although some degree of local autonomy was allowed through the years, public elections for seats in the Legislative Council were held for the first time in 1948.

In 1960 and again in 1963 self-government made gains in the number of members allowed on the Council and in their tenure of office. In 1967 the Legislative Council was replaced by a Governing Council with both legislative and executive functions. Early in 1970 a new constitution was drafted for approval in the elections planned for later in the year. The new constitution provides for the conversion of the Governing Council into a Council of Ministers consisting of a Chief Minister and up to four other ministers, together with an *ex officio* Deputy Governor, an Attorney General, and a Financial Secretary.

The Council of Ministers is to be headed by the Governor who is responsible for external affairs, internal security, defense, and the government's broadcasting and newspaper services. Other government affairs are under the jurisdiction of the several ministers. The new constitution also provides for a Legislative Assembly constituted of fifteen elected members and the ex officio members of the Council of Ministers.

The foreign relations of the Colony are the responsibility of the British Government.

Local Government

Until 1968, there were district-level governments on the Islands of Mahé, Praslin, La Digue, and Silhouette. These local authorities were responsible for market supervision, public sanitation, road maintenance, and certain tax collections. With the exception of the Victoria District Council on Mahé, local government was abolished in 1968, and its functions were taken over by the Governing Council. The Victoria District Council is an elected body, with largely the same responsibilities it previously had for sanitation, roads, markets, and taxes.

Governmental control of the BIOT is in the hands of a Commissioner who is the Governor of Seychelles. An Administrator also resides in Victoria (Mahé). There is no permanent population in the BIOT. Temporary residents, primarily plantation contractors, come from Seychelles and Mauritius.

Legal System

The Seychelles legal system combines French codes and English practice in a fashion suitable to the needs of a semi-autonomous colony. The civil and commercial codes are French in origin. The criminal law is British. Civil and commercial cases of a non-criminal nature are tried in an itinerant Magistrates' Court. If there is

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an appeal, the case is heard in the Supreme Court. Criminal cases begin in the Supreme Court, and are appealed through the Seychelles Court of Appeal in London.

Seychelles criminal law was essentially French until the British system was introduced in 1952. In 1970, additional steps were taken to change the commercial code from French to British. An economic mission, sent to the Seychelles by the British Ministry of Overseas Development in September 1969, recommended this change in the commercial law to facilitate financial investment.

Political Dynamics

The first elections on the basis of adult franchise were held in 1967. The Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) won four of the eight Legislative Council seats contested, the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) won three, and one went to an independent. The SDP and the SPUP do not differ greatly either in political philosophies or in advocated policies. During the 1967 campaign, the SDP called for "integration" into the British Commonwealth. The SPUP argued for an "association" with Britain: Both parties wanted more self-government for the colony, and both wanted the constitution changed to allow for majority control over the legislative and executive bodies of government.

The degree of agreement between the SDP and SPUP was due largely to the absence of strong political issues in the Seychelles society of 1967. The SPUP had originally called for independence from Great Britain, but discussions with the Secretary of State for the Colonies convinced the party's leader, France Albert René, that Britain was not willing to consider the proposition. "Independence" was subsequently omitted from SPUP campaigns.

Beginning in November 1970, the Legislative Council was renamed Legislative Assembly, and its elected members increased in number from eight to fifteen. The increase in the number of elective offices is intended to lead to an increase in political activity. The hundred or so British expatriates in the islands have traditionally occupied only appointed positions in the government, leaving political party interests in the hands of the descendants of the early settlers.

Under the 1970 Constitution, elections are to be held every five years beginning in 1970. Each Legislative Assembly will be elected for the interim five year period, its members representing a total of eight electoral areas. As the city of Victoria, Seychelles' capital, is the only district with local elections, political activity in the islands is largely centered around the national government.

In the November 1970 elections, the SDP under the leadership of David Macham won ten of the fifteen seats in the Assembly. The SPUP, led by Mr. René, won the remaining five seats.

Public Information

There are two daily papers. *Le Seychellois,* published in English and French on alternate days, has a circulation of 1,500. The Department of Information and Broadcasting publishes the other daily *Seychelles Bulletin* which has a circulation of 800. The two political parties publish weeklies. *The People* is the organ of the SPUP and has a circulation of 750. The *Seychelles Weekly,* published by the SDP, has a circulation of 2,000. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria publishes an illustrated periodical, *L'Echo des Iles,* every two weeks. It has a circulation of 2,200.

The government-owned Radio Seychelles is managed and staffed by the Department of Tourism, Information and Broadcasting. It broadcasts in English, French, and Creole for four and one-half hours on weekdays and for three hours on Saturdays and Sundays. The station opened in 1965 and has been improved technically. There are about 10,000 receivers in the islands and it is estimated that eighty percent of the population is reached.

ECONOMY

Character and Structure

The dominant factors in the Seychelles' economy are the cultivation of coconuts and the production of copra. Other important crops in this primarily agricultural economy are cinnamon and vanilla. These three crops account for the bulk of Seychelles exports.

The chief industries are processing copra and vanilla pods. Extraction of oils for local consumption and export is another processing industry. A government-owned distillery produces patchouli oil—a perfume base—for export.

Up to 1968 the equivalent of more than $8.5 million had been made available for development from British Colonial Development and Welfare funds. The development plan for 1966–69 provided $1.8 millions, and a new plan has been prepared for the period to 1972. A major objective is the acceleration of agricultural development as part of a concerted effort to lessen dependence on imports. Other important aid programs are in agriculture, roads, water supply, land reclamation, and educational-social services. The most important economic development activity begun in 1968 was the construction of a new airport on Mahé. The airport is being built as compensation for the loss of the islands ceded to Britain to form the BIOT in 1966. The cost of the airport is estimated at over $10 million and is expected to be completed in 1971. The airport will land large jets and greatly facilitate tourism, a potential industry.

Agriculture

The economy of Seychelles is basically agricultural. Its products, however, are raised primarily for export. Staple foods, such as rice and other cereals, must be imported because most farmers are reluctant to use land for nonexport crops. Approximately one-fourth of the working population is engaged in agriculture.

23,000 acres are planted to coconuts with the number of palms estimated at about two million. Of the other important export crops cinnamon occupies 14,000 acres and vanilla is grown on 700 acres.

Breadfruit is a staple food, growing plentifully on all granitic islands. Sugar, tobacco, cassava, yams, sweet potatoes, plantains, fruits, and vegetables also are grown. Tea is being developed as a secondary crop. About one-third of the land is unproductive. 3,500 acres are forested, of which a fourth is used for commercial timber.

Export production of copra in 1968 amounted to six thousand tons valued at $1.3 million. 3,000 tons of cinnamon products were exported for $1.4 million. Vanilla production fell off sharply in 1967 and 1968 due to the ravages of a fungus disease.

Relatively small numbers of livestock are raised. The numbers estimated for 1965 were: cattle, 4,000; pigs, 4,000; poultry, 22,600. The government encourages the grazing of cattle on plantations both for manure and for meat and milk.

There are several government programs to improve agriculture. Among these are the land settlement scheme, the agronomy scheme, the pest control scheme, the fertilizer scheme, and the animal husbandry scheme. These programs are designed to increase production and include such items as (1) eradication of a disease now afflicting eighty percent of the coconut palms; (2) reforestation to conserve moisture and prevent soil erosion; (3) clearing of 3,000 acres of bracken fern; (4) soil analysis; (5) distribution of subsidized fertilizers; (6) establishment of coconut palm and forest tree nurseries; (7) stock breeding. These programs have been funded by the British Colonial Development and Welfare scheme. The development efforts date from the 1959–60 period and some success has been attained. Cooperatives also have been organized in the processing and marketing areas.

Fisheries

Inshore fishing produces an estimated 1000–1500 tons per annum, which provides for minimum local needs and some export. The 1968, exports of salted fish were four tons valued at three thousand dollars. Fish oil, shark fins, and trepangs were exported in small quantities. Efforts are being made to develop the rich potentials of the surrounding seas with colonial development and welfare funds. Annual grants of about $40,000 for this purpose are recorded in the early 1960s, but significant results are not yet reported. Cold storage facilities are planned.

Industry and Industrial Possibilities

There are few industries other than the processing of copra and vanilla pods, and the extraction of oils for export. Coconut oil for cooking, coconut cakes for stock feeding, soap, coir rope, and mattress fibers are produced for local consumption. A tea factory and two coir factories also are in operation. The technology is very simple. Domestic industry produces straw mats, hats, baskets, and articles made from tortoise-shell, including among the latter cigarette cases, brooches, and toilet sets. A voluntary committee to foster home industries maintains a shop in Victoria, and funds have been granted by the Nuffield Foundation for its support. An annual arts and crafts exhibition displays home industry products such as local furniture, pottery, painting, photography, wood-carving, fine needlework, lace, and embroidery.

The orderly development of a tourist industry is planned. The government's objective is to promote the enjoyment of the natural environment rather than to provide a self-sufficient complex of luxurious hotel facilities. A capacity of 1,400 tourists a year has been estimated, but planned targets are 10,000 for 1972, and 30,000 for 1975. Actual tourist numbers are below this capacity; there were 529 visitors in 1966, 771 in 1967, and 744 in 1968. Limitations of air and shipping facilities have been serious constraints, but the new airport will change this.

Guano has been exported in substantial quantities, but most supplies are exhausted. However, a private company holds a lease to extract up to 10,000 tons a year from Assumption Island, near Aldabra.

The production of electric power has been increasing. A diesel power station was built in 1961, and service has been spreading from the Victoria region. 3,270 kilowatts were produced in 1968.

Labor

The mid-1967 work force was estimated to be about 19,000 persons. About twenty-eight percent of this labor force (5,350 persons) was engaged in farming and fishing which are the chief sources of wealth and income to the islands. Seventeen percent

(3,250 persons) were employed by the government, fourteen percent (2,660) were artisans, eleven percent (2,170) were in domestic service, and thirty percent (5,670) worked at other occupations or were unemployed.

At the end of 1966 there were sixteen trade unions but these were cut to nine in 1968. A forty-five hour week is worked. Minimum wage legislation was set by law in 1957, and revised upward in the 1960s, causing some unemployment. There are provisions for the safety, health and welfare of workers which are established and enforced by law. Training for the building trades, and blacksmiths is offered by the Public Works Department. Nurses are trained in government hospitals. A technical center under the Education Department trains boys as carpenters, joiners, and cabinet makers.

The United States Air Force satellite tracking station on Mahé employs some local labor.

Some emigration takes place to jobs in hotels and restaurants in the United Kingdom. The British army recruits men, and seamen serve in the naval auxiliary. Fishermen and laborers are contracted for work in the BIOT islands. Inflation has been endemic and the cost of living has been high for workers.

Banking and Currency

The basic currency is the Seychelles rupee valued at $0.18 and sterling backed. In addition to notes, cupro-nickel coins are minted.

In 1959, a branch of Barclays Bank was opened. Two previous attempts to establish banks in 1892 and 1916 were unsuccessful. A branch of The Standard Bank as well as a Seychelles Agricultural Bank are located in Victoria. There also is a government operated Post Office Savings Bank with deposits of over $400,000.00

Public Finance

Excluding grants-in-aid for development, estimated revenues for 1969 amounted to over $2.9 million, of which export and import duties accounted for forty-four percent, income tax fifteen percent, and revenue from government property, seven percent. Total revenue doubled in the 1964–1968 period, with the collection of export and import duties becoming progressively more important.

Public expenditures rose from $1.7 million in 1964 to $3.5 million in 1969. Expenditures on the two largest programs in 1968 were $547,768 for education and $407,111 for health. The volume of the budget roughly doubled between 1965 and 1969, with expenditures increasing somewhat more rapidly than revenues.

Economic development has been heavily dependent on British Colonial Development and Welfare Funds (CD&W). From 1958 to 1962, for example, total development expenditures were reported at $3.5 million, of which ninety-three percent were derived from CD&W sources. Colonial development funds and revenue grants-in-aid averaged sixteen percent of Seychelles total expenditures for the 1964–1968 period. Through March 1969, total funds made available were $9.01 million. The existence of other sources of funds, however, is suggested by a national debt of about $2 million.

Expenditures of public capital in the 1969–72 period will be regulated by a development plan which has been submitted to the British Government for approval.

Domestic Trade

Rice, the staple food, is obtained in bulk under trade agreements from Burma and from Thailand. On arrival, the rice is distributed to dealers for retail distribution at subsidized prices. For other products, trade and commerce is conducted by agency houses and merchants. Chinese and Indian firms are very important. They import directly from the United Kingdom, India, and Australia, and they act as distributors.

These firms also purchase a large part of the production of the small planters, and perform the wholesaler's function for many small stores found in the islands.

Foreign Trade

Total exports in 1968 were valued at about $2.9 million of which copra comprised $1.3 million or more than one-third of the total. Exports of cinnamon oil and bark were $1.4 million. Vanilla, patchouli oil, and salted fish are also commercial exports.

Imports in 1968 were valued at about $6 million. Rice imports were valued at $718,000, and other foodstuffs amounted to more than one million dollars. Kerosene, gasoline, and diesel oil imports were valued at $815,000, and cotton piece goods, $355,000. Both exports and imports increased steadily in value between 1966 and 1968 (see table 3).

Copra is exported by the Seychelles Copra Association. The principal market is India. The trade is handled through India's State Trading Corporation. Vanilla and cinnamon move in private channels. Except for rice, other trade moves through private channels, and except for guano exports, all of it passes through the port of Victoria.

Table 3. Value of Exports and Imports in the Seychelles, 1966–1968
(in thousands of U.S. dollars)

	1966	1967	1968
Exports	1,550	1,893	2,915
Imports	3,592	4,427	6,098

Source: Adapted from British Information Services, *Fact Sheets on the Commonwealth: Seychelles*, June 1970.

Burma supplies most of the rice through government-to-government bulk purchase. The remaining imports come in through private traders, chiefly Indian and Chinese. Trade is largely with India, Britain and other Commonwealth countries.

SECURITY

Internal Security

At the end of 1966 the total police force for the colony was 381 men, with an authorized strength of 405. The force included fifty-three security guards at the United States Air Force tracking station, paid for by the United States. Within the police there were regular officers, a Special Force (mobile) set up in 1966 for riot duty and to counter threats to security, and an expanded Special Branch which acted as an intelligence service working against security threats. In 1968 the force had 338 men including 74 special officers.

As of 1966 all members of the police force were Seychellois except the Commissioner of Police and two officers. There was an abundance of applicants, but the number of acceptable recruits was insufficient. A special problem was the low proficiency in English. Nevertheless, the Police Force in 1966 was two-thirds larger than it was in 1961.

Police duties include fighting fires, enforcing local excise taxes (mainly on palm wine), maintaining custody of blasting supplies, enforcing restrictions on the importation of arms other than shotguns and .22 caliber rifles, and acting as immigration officers.

Communication with out-stations is maintained by radio. The police are equipped with shotguns and .22 caliber rifles. Transport consists of motorcycles, Land Rovers and trucks.

The number of criminal cases brought to court in 1967 was 2,683. This number dropped to 1,882 in 1968. The total number of reported cases of crimes in 1966 was 4,371, five less than in 1965.

External Security

The United Kingdom is responsible for securing Seychelles and the BIOT from external aggression. Plans for constructing a military airfield on Aldabra—the BIOT island lying closest to Africa—were abandoned in 1967 in the face of strong opposition from biologists and budgetary requirements to economize. The new civil airfield on Mahé, however, could provide a useful alternative.

In December 1966 an agreement went into effect between the governments of Great Britain and the United States concerning the use of the islands. The agreement on "Availability of Certain Indian Ocean Islands for Defense Purposes" did not specify the types of military uses to which the isles might be put. The United States is not required to pay for use of sites. Although each nation is to pay for the costs of constructing and maintaining its own facilities there is provision for joint financing. The agreement is to run initially for fifty years.

United States has focused on the Chagos atoll of Diego Garcia, and detailed surveys have been made there. The atoll's lagoon offers a large anchorage, and the island can support facilities for communications, supply and air operations. In December, 1970, the United States announced plans to build a nineteen million dollar radio and aid facility on Diego Garcia. The base will be staffed by 250 naval personnel.

CHAPTER 4

MAURITIUS

The island republic of Mauritius lies 500 miles off the east coast of Madagascar, situated strategically on the trade route between South Africa, India, and the Far East (see fig 4). Its airport accommodates international carriers, and its seaport provides anchorage for a dozen ships. Limited docking facilities, however, restrict its usefulness as a potential naval base. The island also continues to serve as a major link in the British overseas communications system.

Historically, the strategic importance of Mauritius has varied with the changing fortunes of its French or British governors. In the days of colonial expansion, it served as a useful port of call on the long voyages between Europe and Asia. While the Suez Canal was operational, the trade routes were diverted northward and the strategic value of the island declined. Since the Canal has been closed, Mauritius has taken on renewed significance as a factor in Indian Ocean affairs. Ships and planes of the Soviet Union are afforded port and landing privileges.

From its colonial past, Mauritius has inherited a host of social, economic, and political problems. The early European settlers established sugar plantations and imported thousands of African slaves to farm them. When slavery was abolished, the plantation owners brought indentured laborers from India. In 1971, the island's precarious economy wavers with the world price of sugar; descendants of the Africans and Indians are packed into the most densely populated rural society in the world; and, political independence has reopened old ethnic antagonisms.

Mauritius is a picturesque island with rugged volcanic features and a large fertile plain. The setting, the land, and the climate are conducive to the production of sugarcane and provide a recreation area for tourists. The population is composed of five ethnic groups totalling more than 800,000 persons. About two-thirds of the population is of Indian descent, including both Hindus and Muslims. One-fourth is Creole—a local mixture of African and European descent—and the remainder is Chinese and French. Most Indians speak Hindi or Urdu, but the most widely spoken language is

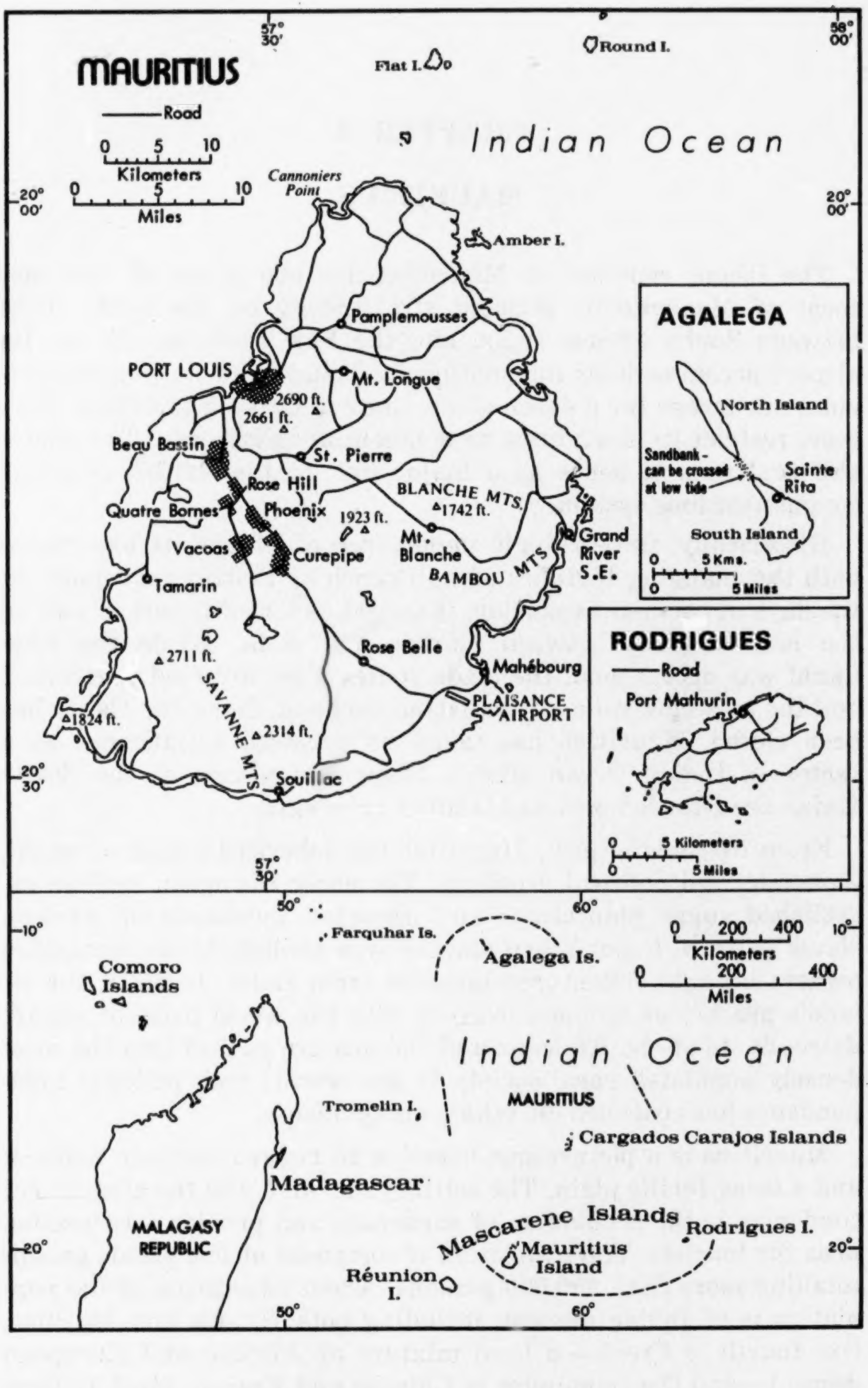
MAURITIUS
Road
0 5 10
Kilometers
0 5 10
Miles
57° 30'
58° 00'
20° 00'
20° 30'
Flat I.
Round I.
Indian Ocean
Cannoniers Point
Amber I.
Pamplemousses
PORT LOUIS
Mt. Longue
2690 ft.
2661 ft.
Beau Bassin
St. Pierre
Rose Hill
Phoenix
Quatre Bornes
BLANCHE MTS.
1742 ft.
1923 ft.
Mt. Blanche
Grand River S.E.
Vacoas
Curepipe
BAMBOU MTS.
Tamarin
2711 ft.
Rose Belle
Mahébourg
PLAISANCE AIRPORT
1824 ft.
SAVANNE MTS.
2314 ft.
Souillac
AGALEGA
North Island
Sandbank - can be crossed at low tide
Sainte Rita
South Island
5 Kms.
5 Miles
RODRIGUES
Road
Port Mathurin
5 Kilometers
5 Miles
50°
60°
10°
20°
Farquhar Is.
Agalega Is.
0 200 400
Kilometers
Miles
Comoro Islands
Indian Ocean
Tromelin I.
MAURITIUS
Cargados Carajos Islands
Madagascar
MALAGASY REPUBLIC
Mascarene Islands
Rodrigues I.
Mauritius Island
Réunion I.

Figure 4. Mauritius.

Creole which is derived from French and African languages. Hindus form the largest religious group, followed by Christians (primarily Roman Catholic) and Muslims. There is no perfect match between ethnic group, language, and religion, but there is enough congruency to permit group identity and group monopoly of economic specialities.

The scarcity of resources in the one-crop economy leads to intense ethnic competition which is reflected in political affairs. Some of the political parties follow ethnic lines, while others attempt to form coalitions. As a result, political alliances are frequently made and broken in the new nation's parliamentary form of government.

Mauritius is a member of the British Commonwealth and its foreign policy is based on the need to develop trading relationships. Financial assistance from the United Kingdom has been required in recent years, however, and as the growing population increases the demand for social services, additional sources of economic development and welfare funds must be found.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Location and Composition

The island of Mauritius is located in the southern Indian Ocean about 500 miles east of Madagascar at 28°18'S latitude, 57°36'E longitude. It is a compact island, thirty-eight miles long and twenty-nine miles broad, the worn and eroded base of an old volcanic formation. The surface of the island consists of a broad plateau that slopes toward a northern coastal plain from elevations of approximately 2,200 feet near the southern coastline. Several low mountain groups and isolated peaks rise above the level of the plateau to give the appearance of a more rugged landscape. A coral reef nearly encircles the island.

General Characteristics

Mauritius has an area of 720 square miles and one of the highest rural population densities in the world—about 850–1,000 persons per square mile. Densities vary somewhat in different sections of the island, in part reflecting the wide range of rainfall and its availability for agriculture, primarily the cultivation of sugarcane.

Prevailing moisture bearing winds are from the southeast. Consequently, the southeastern coast and the mountain slopes, particularly those with southeastern exposures, receive more rainfall than areas situated in the rainshadow of the mountain ranges.

Highest annual precipitation—up to 200 inches—is recorded on upper mountain slopes which are frequently cloud covered and where humidity averages near ninety percent and above. The fewer hours of sunshine, the thin soil cover, and the cooler temperatures at higher elevations do not permit the growth of sugarcane, and it is in these central highlands that crop diversification through the introduction of tea plantations has begun. Lowest annual precipitation—about thirty-five to forty inches—is registered in the western and northwestern coastal regions where irrigation is needed to ensure successful crop production. With adequate moisture, sugarcane yields in these areas, however, are among the highest on the island.

The natural vegetation of the island has disappeared on all but the higher mountain slopes and has been replaced in other areas by the omnipresent sugarcane and aloe, tobacco, and food crops. The soils in many areas on the island tend to be rocky, and a characteristic sight in the fields is the piles of boulders heaped sometimes as high as twenty feet or stacked in long wall-like rows. Mauritius is not self-sufficient in food production, however, and the basic staple, rice, must be imported. Fuel and material for wood products is supplied by a 250-foot-wide windbreak of casuarina that encircles the shores of the island.

A number of small islands are dependencies of Mauritius. The largest and most important is Rodrigues which lies 350 miles to the east. Rodrigues has an area of forty square miles and a population of 20,000 persons. Its main economic function has been to supply onions, chilies, and animal products to the Mauritian markets.

Both Rodrigues and Mauritius are located within the normal storm track for the typhoon-like cyclonic storms that form in the southern Indian Ocean. When storms pass over or near the islands, wind damage to crops and property can be devastating. To the north of Mauritius and generally outside the cyclonic storm belt are Agalega and Cargados Carajos. Agalega consists of two small islands utilized as a copra plantation. Cargados Carajos are shoal areas mainly used as fishing grounds.

Settlement Pattern

Mauritius has a total of 461,000 acres of land, 381,000 acres, or eighty-two percent, of which are cultivable. Fifty percent, or 221,000 acres, is under intensive cultivation. Forty percent of the total acreage (184,000 acres) is occupied by forests, mountains, and natural reserves; the remainder is occupied by urban areas, roads, or housing. Population pressure on the available land is intense and land values are high. Sugar factory estates control large tracts of the cultivable land, but significant portions are individually owned plots as small as one-half acre each. Fragmentation of landholdings, governed by the inheritance laws of the Napoleonic Code, is a handicap to the more efficient application of techniques needed to increase sugarcane yields. Small areas of intensive market gardening have developed near the larger towns, but in general sugarcane is grown wherever conditions permit.

Settlement patterns and landholdings on the island also reflect the ethnic makeup of the population. The original French and Creole families remain among the largest landholders on the island. Control by family corporations has been a means of preventing the fragmentation of estate holdings. Many of the descendants of the original African slaves, however, left the land when slavery was abolished and became town dwellers. Descendants of Indian workers imported for the cane fields have largely become the owners of the small-size holdings of under 100 acres.

Most of the major towns on the island are located along a line stretching across the island from Port Louis to Mahébourg and Plaisance Airport. The towns on the plateau, especially Curepipe, are favored over Port Louis as residential areas because of the cooler temperatures. All sections of the island are served by a good and extensive road system. About eighty percent of the roads are tar-surfaced.

Transportation and Communication

International communications are maintained via regularly scheduled shipping and air services between Mauritius and major European and African ports and with Bombay in India. The island lies on one of the main transit shipping lanes for ships rounding the Cape of Good Hope bound for the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Plaisance airport, near Mahébourg on the southeast coast, is served by several international airlines.

The domestic telephone service had 16,000 subscribers in 1969. Radiotelegraph and cables provide communication links with the rest of the world.

POPULATION AND LABOR FORCE

In 720 square miles Mauritius has over 800,000 persons, over 1,000 per square mile. Advances in medical and public health services have resulted in a falling death rate and a rising birth rate. Economic dependence on one crop and industry—sugar—subject to the vicissitudes of climate and the world market, plus the relatively low level of skills in the labor force, have aggravated the problem. The traditional solutions of migration, birth control, and economic development have been attempted with some success.

Population Structure

The most recent census of Mauritius, made in 1962, found 681,619 persons. The latest United Nations estimate, made in mid-1968, was 810,000 persons. This represented an increase of over 100,000 in just six years.

In the 1962 census, there were 342,306 males, and 339,313 females. Over half of the population was under twenty years of age. Dependent children, aged fourteen and under, comprised 45.3 percent of the population. The aged, those sixty-five and older, comprised 3.2 percent. The remaining 51.5 percent formed a potential labor force aged from fifteen to sixty-four years.

The overall density was 1,074 per square mile in 1967. About 55 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and about 45 percent in urban areas. Port Louis, the capital, was the largest city, with a population of about 128,400 in 1964. Other urban agglomerations included Curepipe (47,600), Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (65,900), Vacoas-Phoenix (44,700), and Quatre Bornes (37,800). These cities, except for coastal Port Louis, are concentrated in the western highlands, and reflect the former need to escape the once prevalent malaria.

Rodrigues, the principal dependency of Mauritius, and the only one permanently inhabited, had about 19,500 persons in 1964, on about 40 square miles. Agalega, given over to coconut plantations, had about 400 persons on its 27 square miles, and the Cargados Carajos Archipelago (the St. Brandon group) had an intermittent population of about 35 fishermen and guano diggers.

Population Dynamics

In 1968, 25,109 births were recorded in Mauritius and Rodrigues; this was at a rate of 31.0 per thousand. In the same year, 7,382 deaths were registered, at a rate of 9.1 per thousand. The rate of natural increase was thus 21.9 per thousand. Subtracting an estimated net emigration rate of 4.9 per thousand, the growth rate was about 1.7 percent in 1968.

Population growth has not been even. After the Dutch failure at colonization, the French took over in 1715, and in 1722 they sent settlers from Réunion to live on Mauritius. By 1735, when Mahé de Labourdonnais became governor, there were about 1,000, including about 200 Europeans. Under Labourdonnais the colony prospered: by 1767 there were almost 20,000 persons, including 15,000 slaves. From 1767 to 1797, the population increased by about 10,000 every decade, and by 1797 there were 60,000 persons. Perhaps 80,000 to 100,000 slaves were imported from Madagascar and East Africa during the period of French rule. The death rate was probably very high.

There were about 70,000 inhabitants when the British conquered Mauritius in 1810. About 20,000 more slaves were smuggled in from 1810 to 1829, despite British attempts to suppress the slave trade. Finally, in 1834, slavery was abolished.

The emancipated slaves refused to continue laboring on plantations where the conditions apparently resembled slavery to them. Many died, while others became small landholders whose descendants continue to look down upon manual labor. To meet the need for plantation labor, indentured workers were brought from India. Even before emancipation, as early as 1816, Indian convicts had been imported. By 1861, there were 300,000 persons in Mauritius, about 200,000 of whom were Indians; most of these people chose to remain on the island when their contracts expired.

Disease, cyclones, and the unbalanced sex ratio operated to check the rate of population growth, which was owed mostly to immigration until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Mauritius has consistently had an excess of males over females, and the ratio was much higher during the years of labor importation. Sometime during the 1860s, the malaria parasite, and perhaps the mosquitos that carried it, were introduced, apparently by Indians. In 1867 there was a great malaria epidemic; 20,000 died in Port Louis alone. This epidemic resulted in a virtual halt to the Indian immigration, and malaria remained as an endemic health problem until the 1940s.

Other epidemics have included cholera in the 1850s, bubonic plague in 1899, influenza in 1919, and poliomyelitis in 1945. Devastations in the sugar industry caused by plant and animal diseases have also played a role in the population history of Mauritius. Cyclones, particularly disastrous in 1892, 1945, and 1960, have decimated people and crops alike.

Because of disease, disaster, and the reduction in immigration, the rate of growth dropped off during the latter part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. At the turn of the century there were around 370,000 inhabitants, and their number grew to 420,000 in 1944.

During World War II British troops stationed in Mauritius engaged in some anti-malaria work. After the war, the Colonial Government engaged in an intensive campaign of draining and spraying which quickly made malaria a rare disease. The death rate fell from 36 per thousand in 1945 to 14 per thousand in 1950. The improved health conditions and the post-war economic boom caused the birth rate to rise until it reached a peak of 47.4 per thousand in 1953.

During the 1950s and 1960s the high birth rate, low death rate, scarcity of land and natural resources, and the underdeveloped state of the economy became matters of serious concern. One solution was sought in birth control with good results. The birth rate fell from 39.0 in 1963 to 31.0 in 1968. In 1957, a British social anthropologist, in collaboration with Mauritian villagers and aided by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) founded the Mauritius Family Planning Association (MFPA). In 1968, the MFPA, still going strong, had over 10,000 women registered with it following various contraceptive methods.

In 1961 a Special Commission of social scientists reported to the Colonial Governor on the population problem and recommended a number of solutions, including various economic reforms. In the same year a British demographer and his colleagues made a report on the situation recommending various cash bonuses for restraint in child bearing.

By 1966, the Government had begun to take a more active role in family planning programs and had received aid from the British government and various international agencies, such as the IPPF. Publicity campaigns are held to promote the ideal of the three-child family. The Catholic organization, Action Familiale, aids family planning, and in 1967 it reported that nearly 6,000 persons were following the temperature-rhythm method.

Despite this, cultural barriers to birth control continue to inhibit solving the population problem. Although Hinduism and Islam do not oppose birth control, in popular belief they favor large families. Children are seen as old age security; early marriages are the norm; and, individuals are not considered fully adult until they become parents.

Migration has been a less successful solution, but it has had an impact. In 1967, departures exceeded arrivals by 3,604, or about 4.7 per thousand; MFPA figures for the same year show an emigration rate of 4.5 per thousand. Emigration as a solution to the population problem has the disadvantage of not being under the control of Mauritians. The under-populated Malagasy Republic has so far not welcomed them, despite their overtures, perhaps because it was once a French possession. Other potential havens, such as Brazil and British Honduras, are too distant and too expensive to reach, while other, more developed countries, such as Britain, South Africa, or Australia, have restrictions as to color, number, or occupation of immigrants. Often the ones able to emigrate are those whose skills are needed in the development of Mauritius.

Labor Force

Adults aged 15–64 comprised 51.5 percent of the population in 1962; thus, there was a potential labor force of around 351,200 persons. Unemployment and underemployment have continued to exist. In 1968, there were 9,000 unemployed persons; in 1966 and 1967 there had been more, around 14,000. Nearly 60,000 work for the larger organizations in the sugar industry during the growing and harvest season and about 50,000 find work during the intercrop season; most of these are unskilled. Service occupations accounted for about 62,000 in 1967; manufacturing accounted for fewer than 10,000.

Access to occupations tends to fall along ethnic lines and, secondarily, according to residence. Thus, the overwhelming majority of cane workers are Hindus, situated in rural areas; many Hindus own small canefields. The Muslim Indians tend to be urban landholders and to be active in the import-export trade. The mulatto Creoles, having renounced manual labor, monopolize the white collar occupations in urban areas. The owners of the twenty-five or so large sugar plantations are of French descent. The Chinese are the small shopkeepers in both rural and urban areas.

Economic development has tended to break down or blur the association of ethnic group and occupation. The gradual extension of suffrage in the 1940s and 1950s, and independence in 1968 have given political power to the Indians, the largest ethnic group; this power seems likely to further alter the ethnic distribution of occupations.

The shortage of skilled workers not only inhibits economic development, but also contributes to unemployment. Since 1965, the International Labor Organization has provided funds and assisted the Mauritian government in operating the Industrial Trade Training Centre in Beau Bassin. The John Kennedy College (secondary level) offers training in technical and commercial subjects, both full and parttime, and in the evenings. The College of Agriculture, under Department of Agriculture administration, provides courses in general agriculture and sugar technology. Four other schools provide technical and vocational training. The Small Scale Industries Branch, under the Ministry of Education and Culture, has since 1963 sought to provide training for the unemployed. In 1967 it operated five centers.

ETHNIC GROUPS, LANGUAGES, AND RELIGION

Mauritius has a society of diverse religious ethnic communities which are joined by the central government or common market economy rather than common values and institutions. Each community has its own special sector of the economy. There are five major ethnic groups, overlapping somewhat with groupings based on language and religion. Despite the tendency toward ethnic group monopoly of economic specialties, individuals are ranked not so much by ethnic groups as by occupation and wealth.

Historical Background

Two elements of the population have been present since the earliest days of settlement in Mauritius. These are the French and the Africans, including those from Madagascar. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, Indians were imported to fill the gap (see Population and Labor Force in this chapter). Chinese immigration was on a smaller scale; Chinese traders have been arriving since the latter part of the 19th century.

Ethnic Groups

The 1962 census recognized only three ethnic groups. These were the General Population (Europeans and mulattoes), the Sino-Mauritians, and the Indo-Mauritians (divided into Hindu and Muslim). The Census enumerated 454,909 Indo-Mauritians, of whom 344,587 were Hindu and 100,322 were Muslim; 20,450 Sino-Mauritians, and 206,260 General Population. About two-thirds of the population is Indian (and about three-quarters of this Hindu), about three percent is Chinese, two percent French, and about one-fourth of the population is Creole (mulatto).

In 1967, it was estimated that there were 532,330 Indo-Mauritians, 25,022 Sino-Mauritians, and 224,692 members of the General Population. The Indians have the highest birth rate.

The Creoles are a mixed population; the major elements are the African and European, but there is some Chinese and Indian admixture. Light-colored Creoles can become assimilated into the European group if they substitute French for the Creole language.

Relations among the ethnic groups tend to be distant at best. The economic sphere is usually the arena for inter-group rivalry because overpopulation strains economic resources, occupations tend to be open only to individual ethnic groups, and because the government has an important role in economic affairs. When jobs are scarce, those in charge of distributing them frequently favor members of their own community. Questions such as the official language and the subject matter in schools become the objects of intense political competition.

Membership in an ethnic group is based on various criteria. The most important criteria are language, religion, color, and family name. For example, an Indian is usually Hindu or Muslim, but he may be Roman Catholic. Most Indians speak Hindi or Urdu (closely related languages), but a sizeable group speaks Tamil or Creole. Chinese converts to Christianity usually change their Chinese names to European Christian names. The substitution of

French for Creole enables mulattoes to move into the European group, but a dark color would make claims of pure European ancestry unconvincing. Thus ethnic group membership is based partly on relatively objective criteria of culture and physical appearance, but individual claims and the social recognition accorded them are the final arbiters. This is especially true of the group referred to as General Population.

Languages

Creole is the lingua franca of Mauritius and the language spoken by the largest number of people. In the 1962 Census, 289,112 persons were enumerated as Creole speakers. Creole is a language (not a dialect) based on a simplified French syntax, with a modified French pronunciation, and a wealth of new words and phrases borrowed from African languages or modified in the new social context. It arose as large numbers of African slaves from diverse backgrounds were brought together on plantations and required to communicate with each other and with their owners who did nothing to encourage the mastery of correct French among their workers.

Since Creole co-exists with French, it has an ambivalent status. It is valued as the mother tongue and as an expressive means of communication. At the same time, however, it is devalued for its origins and associations with lower-status individuals.

Hindi, an Indo-European language (or group of dialects) of Indian spoken by Hindus, was spoken by 206,978 persons in 1962. Urdu, a Muslim language similar to Hindi, was spoken by 40,667. The two languages differ chiefly in alphabet and loan-words; Hindi has more words from Sanskrit and Pali, languages of the Hindu scriptures, and is written with the ancient Indian Devanagari script, while Urdu contains more loan-words from Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, and is written with a modified form of the Arabic script. Each language is associated with one of the rival states of the Indian subcontinent, as well as with the two subgroups of Indo-Mauritians.

Other Indian languages include Marathi, spoken by 7,420 persons, Gujarati, spoken by 734, Telugu, spoken by 6,721, and Tamil, spoken by 17,970. Tamil is a Dravidian language of Ceylon and South India, and Telugu is another Dravidian language of South India. Gujarati and Marathi are both Indo-European languages, the former from western India, and the latter from south central India. Tamil is the only one of these with important political or cultural consequences in Mauritius.

Chinese speakers numbered 13,621 in 1962. Census breakdowns did not indicate dialect. French, the revered language of the General Population and mother tongue of the economic elite, was spoken by 53,367. English, the official language, was spoken by only 1,824. There existed a residual category of 43,205 in the Census, for cases where the language was not ascertained or not listed.

Religion

Hindus constituted the largest group in 1962, numbering 332,771. The traditional Hindu group included 156,663 persons. There were 93,194 adherents of a reformist sect. Other Hindus numbered 82,914.

Unlike most other great religions, Hinduism remains tied to a particular people; it is an integral part of the culture of India. Central in Hindu thought is the concept of Brahman, the all-pervading God, the creator and substance of the universe. Traditionally Hindus have worshipped Brahman under many forms or deities, and for the unsophisticated the monotheistic thread tends to become lost in devotion. Speculative philosophy and a moral code are strong currents in Hindu tradition.

The ancient hymns of the Rigveda, the metaphysical Upanishads, the moral Bhagavad-Gita, and the ritual Brahmanas are the scriptural foundation of Hinduism, but they are not canonical like the Christian Bible or the Islamic Qur'an. Hinduism flourishes in many sects, and has many offshoots including Buddhism and Jainism which originated in the sixth century B.C.

Christians were the next largest group; there were 229,250 of them in 1962. Roman Catholics were in the majority, with 218,572, or about 32 percent of the population. There were 6,705 members of the Church of England. Seventh Day Adventists numbered 2,473, and miscellaneous other Christians totalled 1,500.

Islam formed the third of the major religions in Mauritius; there were 110,332 Muslims. Of these, only 20,668 declared themselves to be Sunnis. Members of the other great branch of Islam, the Shia, numbered only 243. There were 957 members of the Ahmadiyyah, a reformist heterodox sect which originated in India. The greatest number of the Muslims did not state allegiance to any specific Muslim community.

There were 5,950 Chinese Buddhists, 660 Confucians, and 740 adherents of other traditional Chinese religions. Bahai, a syncretist sect of Persian origin, claimed 479 adherents. Eight hundred eighty-seven had no religion, and 459 constituted a residual category about which there was no information.

Christianity has the greatest ethnic diversity among its adherents, including the Creoles and French, as well as many Chinese (over one-half) and Indians. Moving upward in the social scale may be marked by conversion to Christianity. Adherence to other religions tends to fall along ethnic lines, so that the Hindus and Muslims are Indians, and the Buddhists are Chinese.

The Roman Catholic Church, the largest single religious body, the most closely organized, and the church of the economic elite, is perhaps the most powerful religious voice in Mauritius. The entire island is one diocese headed by Bishop Margeot, a native Mauritian; the cathedral of Saint Louis is located in Port Louis. There are 38 parishes in the diocese, with 91 priests, 55 of whom are diocesan clergy and 36 regular. Mauritius is also served by 336 men and women in religious orders, most of them in the extensive educational system maintained by the Church (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

The Vatican is represented in Mauritius by an Apostolic Delegate without formal diplomatic status. The island is the home of numerous shrines to which pilgrimages are made, including the Monument to Our Lady of Peace in Port Louis, and the tomb of Père Jacques-Désiré Laval, a French missionary priest and physician; Laval is revered even by non-Christians. Feast-days, notably Corpus Christi, are the occasions for large processions and festivities.

The Church of England in Mauritius is headed by a bishop in Phoenix. The Saint James Cathedral is located in Port Louis. There is also a minister for the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Jummah Mosque in Port Louis is a focal point for Muslims, while the Buddhists have a temple in a suburb of Port Louis. Hindus make pilgrimages to a shrine at Grand Bassin, an inland lake.

While formal religious tenets separate them, Mauritians are united by popular religious beliefs. Many believe in the power of saints or dieties of other groups, or at least hold it worthwhile to propitiate them. So non-Christians visit the tomb of Père Laval, Hindus venerate the tombs of Muslim saints, and Muslims perform rituals to Hindu deities. Belief in spirits, the *gris-gris,* is common, as is recourse to sorcery.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Social Structure

Mauritian society is divided both horizontally, into ethnic groups, and vertically, into socio-economic classes. Formerly, the French were at the top, controlling the government and the economic system and possessing the greatest access to education and other cultural amenities. Below them were the Muslim landowners and businessmen. Next came the Creoles as white collar workers and small businessmen, and the Chinese shopkeepers. At the bottom were the Hindu small-holders, tenants, and estate workers.

National development modified this picture. Opportunities for political and economic advancement were opened to more people as the franchise and the educational system were extended beginning in the 1940s. Poor Hindus worked hard, saved their money, and began buying tiny bits of land. By mid-century nearly half of the sugarcane lands were owned by Indians. Some Indians became wealthy. The changes in Indo-Mauritian status were paralleled by the growth of nationalism in the Indian subcontinent, and a corresponding pride in ethnic identity on the part of Indians in Mauritius. Creoles, however, still associate higher social status with assimilation into the European ethnic category.

Each ethnic group also has its own separate ranking system, based on somewhat independent criteria. Nevertheless, wealth, power, and adherence to traditional cultural values produce high rank in each group. Brought together in a single state since 1968 independent of foreign control, the separate ranking systems have begun to merge as the economy diversifies and education spreads.

Family

Family structure varies somewhat according to ethnic group, but a trend toward a uniform type can be discerned. Still common among Indo-Mauritians is the patrilocal extended family, which consists of an older married couple surrounded by their unmarried children and their married sons with their families. The senior male is the head of the household, and he usually wields a great deal of authority. Marriages are arranged, and girls are married early to protect their honor. Early marriage is one of the factors which make the Indian birth rate the highest in the island.

Chinese, Europeans, and Creoles tend to favor the nuclear family, which consists of a married couple and their unmarried minor children. Households may typically include other relatives, such as aged aunts or parents, and among the Chinese, wider flung kin ties are of great importance in business networks. There are many common-law marriages—the form is particularly common among the poorer Creoles. About 8,000 couples were reported in the 1962 census. Legal marriage is the preferred form of union, however, and the nuclear family on the European model is becoming the usual type.

Social Values

Social values stem from the various ethnic and religious traditions and from economic conditions. There is little consensus on values for the nation as a whole.

Family background is a focus of concern. Individuals are continually being evaluated in terms of family reputation, adherence to cultural ideals, and ethnic derivation. Great weight is given to the small symbols of status. Education is valued not so much for its own sake as for its prestige value. The educated Indian would rarely work in the fields, even if he needed the money, for to do manual work would be degrading for him.

There are also ideals of honor and honesty, of charity and community service. Those who live up to these ideals, transcending the exigencies of daily life, are ranked high. Père Laval, virtually a Mauritian national saint, was one of these.

Living Conditions

Mauritius, once an unhealthy place, has improved in the last twenty-five years, although health problems remain. Anemia and general malnutrition are probably the most serious problems, affecting perhaps half of the labor force and resulting in apathy and slowness. Despite its virtual eradication, malaria, continues to be a potential danger because of the presence of the mosquito that carries it, and the proximity of Africa. Bilharzia or schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease of the blood and internal organs, is transmitted by water snails and constitutes the most serious local hazard after malaria. Other tropical diseases, such as yellow fever and leprosy, are relatively rare.

Tuberculosis is aggravated by malnutrition and overcrowded housing conditions. Various gastro-intestinal disorders, including hookworm, debilitate much of the population, and constituted the leading cause of death in 1967. Infant deaths, diseases of the circulatory system, and diseases of the respiratory system (apparently mostly tuberculosis) accounted for most other deaths in 1967. The infant mortality rate was 70.4 per thousand in 1968.

The Ministry of Health is in charge of the promotion of health and prevention of disease, the certification of training of medical personnel, and the maintenance of medical facilities. Receiving aid from the World Health Organization, it continues work against malaria and bilharzia, and sends personnel abroad for specialized training.

The government operates eleven hospitals, the chief one being the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital at Pamplemousses. Equipped with modern surgical and medical facilities, its operations have been limited by lack of qualified personnel. Other major hospitals include the Port Louis Civil Hospital, the Princess Margaret Orthopaedic Centre in Quartre Bornes, and the Brown Sequard Hospital for the mentally ill in Beau Bassin. Specialized facilities are available for tuberculosis and leprosy patients. State hospitals can accommodate over 2,600 patients.

Forty-five out-patient dispensaries, forty maternal and child care centers, and five mobile units supplement the state hospitals. The large sugar estates provide a total of twenty-four hospital and twenty-four clinic facilities for their employees; other private institutions have clinical and nursing facilities. Rodrigues has one major and two small hospitals, while Agalega has a small hospital and a dispensary.

The government operates several dental clinics and runs a medical and dental service in the public schools. The Ministry of Health conducts various publicity campaigns to educate the public and watches over sanitation in public institutions and transport facilities. Expenditure on health for the 1967 fiscal year was the equivalent of nearly $3,960,000.

There are three major types of houses in Mauritius: wooden, corrugated iron over a wood frame—common in urban *bidonvilles* —and thatch or wattle-and-daub—common in rural areas. House construction is adequate for normal conditions, because of the warm tropical climate, but severe cyclones, such as those in 1960, can render thousands homeless. After 1960, the government built over 10,000 houses under the 1960 Cyclone Housing Scheme. The Mauritius Housing Corporation makes loans to building companies. The large sugar estates supply housing for their workers.

Mauritius is dependent on imports for much of its food, including the staple rice, most meat and fish, cooking oils, flour, and milk. Fruits and vegetables are grown locally, and the Ministry of Agriculture is encouraging an increase in their production. The diet for most Mauritians tends to be inadequate, especially in protein and minerals such as iron. The various ethnic groups have retained their special food taboos and cookery styles, the Hindus refraining from beef and the Muslims from pork. Rice is the basis of the diet for most groups, being accompanied by *brédes créoles* (stewed greens) or lentils among the Creoles, curries of meat or vegetables among the Indians, and meat and vegetable dishes among the Chinese. French cookery has survived among a small part of the population, but most Mauritians prefer highly spiced food.

Dress is another area in which the various ethnic groups demonstrate their identities. The Creoles, Europeans, and many Chinese wear light-weight European style clothing, with sandals and straw hats to ward off the sun. Less assimilated Chinese continue to wear the traditional long robes. Indian women wear the sari, a long draped skirt, with a blouse, or an ensemble consisting of long baggy trousers, tunic, and draped head scarf. Indian men may wear Western dress or the traditional loin cloths.

Social welfare is provided by the government, by private agencies, and by individual families. Total welfare, called Outdoor Relief, is furnished to unemployable indigents with no other source of care. Over 28,000 received Outdoor Relief in 1967. The government also furnishes work and partial supplies to the needy. It maintains twenty-nine social welfare centers, mostly in rural areas. These are designed to promote community development and provide education. The centers have maternity and child care clinics attached and distribute free milk. Monthly pension payments are made to the needy aged. Since 1963, public assistance expenditures have exceeded those on education.

Sports are popular. The Champs de Mars in Port Louis is the scene of avidly attended races. Sailing regattas in Grand Bay and Mahébourg are annual events. Soccer is the national sport, while tennis and basketball are also enjoyed. Less strenuous recreation is afforded by radio and television broadcasts, and by the cinema. The island has forty-seven theaters, and nine mobile cinema units.

Creativity

Artistic and intellectual activities have remained fairly lively in Mauritius since the days of French colonization, and continue to be respected endeavors. Prosper d'Epinay, a Mauritian painter and sculptor of the eighteenth century, and Charles Edouard Brown-Séquard, a Mauritian scientist of the nineteenth century, were both well-known in Europe.

The Mauritius Institute, located in Port Louis, is one of the major cultural institutions in the island. Founded in 1880, it includes a public library, three museums, and an art gallery. The Public Library, the National Library of the island contains over 45,000 volumes, mostly in French and English. The museums are devoted to history, natural history, and to Robert Edward Hart, a modern Mauritian poet.

Five literary and scientific societies are associated with the Mauritius Institute. Among these is the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius, founded in 1829; it maintains its own library, sponsors public lectures, and publishes its proceedings. The Société de l'Histoire de l'Ile Maurice, founded in 1938, sponsors historical research on Mauritius. The Société d'Ecrivains Mauriciens, founded in 1938, is a literary society. The Société de Technologie Agricole et Suciére de Maurice, founded in 1910, is devoted to study of agriculture and sugar technology, and publishes the quarterly *Revue Agricole.* The Indian Cultural Association, founded in 1936, fosters Indian culture, and publishes ***The Indian Cultural Review***, a quarterly.

There were numerous other cultural institutions and societies, many of them devoted to the cultures of particular ethnic groups. French institutions included the Alliance Française, the Centre Cultural Français, the Académie Mauricienne, and the Union Culturelle Française. Indian culture is fostered by the Hindi Pracharini Sabha and the School of Indian Music and Dance. The British Council maintains a library, sponsors lectures, and manages cultural ties with Great Britain. Generally run by local persons are the Vacoas House of Debators, the Mauritius Dramatic Club, and the Mauritius Archives, which is the official document depository of the island.

Education

Eduation is not compulsory at any level in Mauritius, and is free only on the primary level. Nevertheless, the demand for it is so great that literacy is nearly universal, and the numbers of educated persons exceed the number of jobs available for them. Education follows the British model.

In 1967 there were 347 preschool institutions, with 13,469 pupils aged three to five. Children enter the primary course at five, and continue until twelve. In 1967, there were 175 government primary schools and 55 aided primary schools. These schools—private institutions supplied with teachers and financial support by the government—included fifty-three Roman Catholic schools and two Hindu schools. There were also seventy other primary schools, with a total of 4,175 pupils. Adding the 136,320 pupils in government and aided schools, there were 140,494 primary pupils in 1967. By 1969, there were 231 government and aided schools and 106 private schools.

Two senior primary schools and one central school supplement the education of those who do not continue into the secondary level. They offer an additional three years of primary education and crafts to both boys and girls. There are four state secondary schools: The Royal College in Port Louis, the Royal College in Curepipe, the Queen Elizabeth College for girls, and the John Kennedy College. All but the Kennedy College which provides technical and commercial courses, offer an exclusively academic (grammar school) program. Children in their last year of primary school may compete in the Junior Scholarship Examination for the government scholarships offered annually to 120 boys and 80 girls for attending secondary schools.

In addition to the 2,538 pupils in the government secondary schools, there were 6,372 pupils in 1968 at thirteen aided secondary schools. An additional 120 private secondary schools with lesser standards had 30,750 students. Many of the better private secondary schools are run by various Catholic religious orders.

In 1967 the University of Mauritius was opened, incorporating the College of Agriculture which had formerly been the only institution of higher learning in the island. Located at Le Réduit in Moka, in temporary quarters, it had only a few students in 1970; it is planned along traditional British lines. Government and private scholarships enable many students to pursue studies abroad, and in the mid-1960s, about 1,500 did so. Teacher training is offered in a three-year program at the Teacher Training College at Beau Bassin, which had 568 students in 1967.

Mauritians tend to regard education as a right, as a means of acquiring government jobs, and as an opportunity for social advancement. Persons who have completed or partially completed their educations outnumber the job openings, resulting in intense competition. Many of the graduates become tutors in the unaided private schools, where they assist students for the competitive examinations.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Governmental System

After being an English colony for a century-and-a-half, Mauritius became an independent state on March 12, 1968. The new nation chose to join the British Commonwealth of Nations, thereby accepting Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of State.

The British sovereign is represented on the island by a Governor General, but a Council of Ministers is responsible for the direction and control of the government. The national constitution, enacted at the time of independence from England, provides for a parliamentary government headed by a Prime Minister and supported by a Legislative Assembly. The Prime Minister, as leader of the majority party in the legislature, is also head of the Council of Ministers. Initially, the Council was authorized to have fourteen members. In November 1969 the Constitution was amended to allow for twenty-one members: the Prime Minister (who was also Minister of Defense and Internal Security and Minister of Information and Broadcasting); the Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Co-operative Development; Minister of Communications; Minister of Economic Planning and Development; Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs; Minister of External Affairs, Tourism, and Emigration; Minister of Finance; Minister of Health; Minister of Housing, Lands, and Town and Country Planning; Minister of Commerce and Industry; Minister of Labour;

Minister of Local Government; Minister of Social Security; Minister of Works; Minister of Youth and Sports; Secretary of State for Works; Secretary of State for Information and Broadcasting; Secretary of State for Agriculture; Secretary of State for Emigration; Secretary of State for Finance; and the Attorney General.

The post-independence government of Mauritius was derived from a series of partially-autonomous, locally-franchised Councils of Government beginning in 1825. In 1886, ten members of the Council were elected from various districts of the island. Elections were subsequently held on a regular basis until the first Legislative Council was formed in 1948. A ministerial system was introduced in 1957, and the next year universal suffrage was granted to the islanders.

In April 1965, the Mauritius government and the British Colonial Office began talks which led to Mauritian independence in 1968. Preparation for statehood included the formulation of a new electoral system in 1966, and the establishment of internal self-government in August 1967. General elections were held shortly thereafter. A majority of the resultant Legislative Assembly voted for national sovereignty. Independence was granted on March 12, 1968.

The history of Mauritius' colonial status represents a special case in the "direct rule" system Great Britain used for governing some of its colonies. Technically, the Mauritians were ruled directly. British officials always were present on the island, and they always were nominally in charge of the government. In fact, however, French officials remained in their posts when Mauritius was ceded to England in 1814, and their descendants continued to manage the affairs of government through all the colonial years. The French and English were fellow-Europeans, sharing Western traditions of government, and contrasted sharply with the alien traditions that separated the British from their subjects in India, Burma, and Africa. The English did not have the problem of preparing the Mauritians for self-rule. Public elections and legislative councils were not a foreign introduction to the society of the Mauritian governing elite.

Principal Legislative and Executive Institutions

The 1968 Mauritian government was founded on a unicameral parliament, called the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly makes the nation's laws, and regulates its revenue and budget policies. It has seventy members—sixty-two are elected and eight are appointed. The nation's prime minister is the leader of the majority political party in the Assembly. He is appointed to the post by the

Governor General, who also appoints the ministerial Attorney General from the members of the Assembly.

The executive branch of the Mauritian government, according to the 1967 constitution, is the Council of Ministers. The Governor General, in counsel with the Prime Minister, appoints the other ministers who form the Council.

Local Government

Below the national level, Mauritian local government is handled by administrative districts, with separate councils for urban and for rural areas. Local government in the several "dependencies" of Mauritius varies with conditions on the specific islands. Rodrigues, for example, has a population of some 20,000, with a central government and five parish councils. The island sends two elected representatives to the Mauritius Legislative Assembly. The Cargados Carajos Archipelago, on the other hand, has no permanent residents, and the two islands of Agalega have only 400 inhabitants. The Archipelago and Agalega are ruled administratively from Port Louis.

Port Louis became a municipality in 1850 and is governed by an elected Council of sixteen members. Other towns on the island had a variety of forms of local government until the Local Government Ordinance was passed in 1962. The Ordinance was designed to substitute one comprehensive plan for the numerous ones historically used. As of 1965, the existing municipal and town councils, and the number of registered voters for each was as follows: Port Louis, 38,776; Curepipe, 16,162; Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, 18,835; Quatre Bornes, 13,240; Vacoas-Phoenix, 13,402.

Rural local government in Mauritius has undergone a series of revisions since the end of World War II. Officials have changed from being passive administrators of colonial policies to active spokesmen for local affairs. In 1947, village councils were established, and with funds provided by the central government these councils were given the responsibility for road construction, public sanitation, and improvements in water and food supply. In 1951, village and district councils were given power to regulate local taxes and property rights, and to make by-laws suitable to the peculiar needs of the areas under their jurisdiction. In 1955, rural administration again was reviewed by the Mauritius government, and two recommendations were made: one, district and village councils should cease to be agencies for the distribution of funds derived from the central government and should raise their own funds; two, central government officials should not also be members of district and village councils. The Ministry of Local Government, which is responsible for both urban and rural local government, implemented these recommendations in its 1962 ordinance.

The Civil Service

The official head of the Mauritian Civil Service is titled Chief Secretary, and as such is an *ex officio* member of the Legislative Assembly. As a member of the Council of Ministers, the Chief Secretary is known as Secretary to the Cabinet.

In 1953, the Public Service Commission was organized to regulate appointments, promotions, disciplinary actions, and entrance examinations. The Police Service Commission was established in 1959 to supervise the personnel policies of the Police Force. The chairmanship of each commission is held by the same individual.

The Legal System

The laws of Mauritius embody both French and English codes. Civil, penal, and commerical law are basically French. The Bankruptcy Law, the Company Law, the Law of Evidence, and the Law of Criminal Procedure are almost entirely English.

The highest judicial authority is the supreme court, consisting of a chief justice and two junior judges. The supreme court has powers of supervision over all the other courts of Mauritius, and over trials requiring a jury. Juries consist of nine men, and require a seven-vote agreement to effect a decision.

In addition to the supreme court, there is a court of criminal appeal, and a court of civil appeal. The chief justice and the judges of the supreme court also preside over the two appeal courts. An Intermediate Criminal court, with three senior magistrates, has jurisdiction to try criminal cases without juries, but it cannot pronounce sentences of more than five years' penal servitude.

The jurisdictions of the district courts, in both civil and criminal matters, cover those offences punishable by fines or sentences less severe than those dispensable by the intermediate criminal court. The industrial court has jurisdiction over all labor disputes.

The Attorney General's Office is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The staff includes the Solicitor General, six Crown counsels, and various clerks and assistants.

Electoral System

The 70-member Legislative Assembly is elected every five years by universal adult suffrage. The Assembly in power at the time Mauritius achieved independence (1968) was elected in 1967. A by-election was held in September 1970, and the next regular election was scheduled for 1974. Town, district, and village council members are also elected by popular vote.

There is provision for the selection of eight unsuccessful candidates who have made the best showing in an election. These selected candidates serve whichever communities are under-represented in the Assembly after the general elections. The Electoral Commissioner's Office supervises the voting procedures during elections, and certifies voter and candidate eligibility.

Political Dynamics

Various political parties, representing various interests, had developed in the years before independence and by the time arrangements for nationhood began in earnest there were four well-established groups. The Constitutional Conference, held in London in September 1965, was attended by representatives of all political parties in the Mauritian Legislative Assembly: The Mauritius Labour Party [MLP], headed by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam; The Parti Mauricien Social Democrate [PMSD], headed by Mr. Jules Koenig, former mayor of Port Louis; The Independent Forward Bloc [IFB], headed by the Honorable S. Bissondoyal; and The Muslim Committee of Action [MCA], headed by the Honorable Abdool Rajack Mohamed, also a former mayor of Port Louis. Two independent members of the legislature, the Honorable J. M. Paturau, and the Honorable J. Ah-Chuen, also attended the Conference.

The Mauritius Labour Party (MLP) (Parti Travailliste) is supported largely by the Hindu population, but with the aid of an appreciable number of Creole votes. The MLP worked strenuously for national independence, in close cooperation with the Muslim Committee of Action (MCA) (Comité d'Action Musulman), and the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB).

The MLP, MCA, and IFB formed a coalition just before the 1967 elections to assure victory. As the MLP was much the strongest party, it dominated the policies of the coalition, called the Independence Party. The MCA, as its name implies, sponsored Muslim interests. The Independent Forward Block (IFB), not to be confused with the Independence Party, like the MLP, spoke for Hindu interests. Unlike the MLP, the IFB was exclusively Hindu in constituency.

Opposition to the Mauritian independence movement came from the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (MSDP) (Parti Mauricien Social Democrate). The MSDP was established to represent the position and interests of the descendants of the early French plantation owners. Later, supplemented by property-owning Creoles, the MSDP was constrained to boycott the final session of the

September 1965, London-held Constitutional Conference on the feasibility of Mauritian statehood.

In November 1965, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies announced that the Chagos Archipelago, a dependency of Mauritius, would be placed under Seychelles control in a newly-formed colony called British Indian Ocean Territory. The three MSDP ministers promptly resigned their posts, in what they said was a protest against unsatisfactory compensation to Mauritius for the loss of the Archipelago.

Following the elections of 1967, Gaetan Duval assumed leadership of the Mauritian Social Democratic Party. After March 12, 1968, the question of Mauritian independence ceased to be an issue, and Duval brought his party back into the Legislative Assembly to pursue other goals.

The Hindu-led Mauritius Labour Party continued its alliance with the Muslim Committee of Action and the Independent Forward Bloc until March 1969. In a disagreement over certain MLP policies, the IFB withdrew from the coalition, leaving its fellow-Hindu MLP in league with the Muslim MCA.

In December 1969, under the name National Unity Government, the MSDP reconciled itself to a coalition with the Labour Party. Duval was appointed Minister of External Affairs.

A new political group, headed by Paul R. Berenger, emerged from the September 1970 by-elections. Called the Militant Mauritian Movement (MMM), Berenger's party is reportedly made up of Hindu labor-leaders, working-class Franco-Mauritians, and youthful Creoles, all disenchanted with the rate of social progress under the labor government. The MMM won one seat in the Legislative Assembly.

Prime Minister Ramgoolam's planned socialism has been challenged before, but never so critically as by the MMM. Ramgoolam believes that socialism should be approached gradually through evolutionary stages.

It is clear that the two years following independence was insufficient time for Mauritian political alliances to become firm. The various ethnic and economic segments of the population were still reluctant to trust the care of their particular interests to a political party not of their own making. Just what interests any group was most concerned about were still not always certain, even to the group itself. Group identification, too, was still fluctuating.

Public Information

Press

The press is free and is represented by a large number of publications. There are thirteen daily papers with a combined circulation of 85,000. Eight of the papers are published in French and English, four in Chinese, and one in French only. One paper in Hindi appears twice a week, and there are nineteen weeklies published in French and English. Two of them also carry articles in Hindi or Tamil. There are also six biweekly papers and nine other periodicals published at various intervals.

Radio and Television

The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation provides the only radio service on the island. It became commercial in 1963, and reaches more than 77,000 licensed receivers. Television broadcasting began in 1965 and more than 14,000 licenses had been issued by June 1969. Programs are broadcast in English, French, and Hindi.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

When Mauritius became independent in 1968 it assumed a role in international affairs that has become increasingly complex. Its geographic and economic situation and its colonial heritage required the continuation of close relations with Great Britain and many of the Commonwealth countries. Mauritius agreed to consult with Great Britian whenever it felt its security was threatened internally or externally (see Security in this chapter). With a single-crop economy geared primarily to Commonwealth markets, the government sought to diversify the island's industries. Agricultural aid was provided in the early 1970s by the United States and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Japan and the Soviet Union were developing fishing interests (see Economy in this chapter).

Mauritius was admitted to the United Nations a few weeks after it became independent. It is a member of several United Nations specialized agencies. It also has joined two African organizations: the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Common Organization of African and Malagasy States and Mauritius (OCAM). Diplomatic relations have been established with African and Asian members of the Commonwealth, with most western European nations, and with Israel, Communist China, and the Soviet Union. In late 1970 the Soviet Union was granted refueling and docking privileges for its ships and landing rights for Aeroflot planes (see Economy in this chapter).

With the help of Great Britain and the Commonwealth Mauritius has maintained a favorable balance of trade since independence. But economic expansion cannot cope with the rate of population growth since the end of World War II.

ECONOMY

Character and Structure

This is a single crop economy under heavy pressure from a growing population. The sugar industry is the main source of income, employment and wealth. It occupies ninety percent of the arable land and accounts for over ninety percent of exports and for more than thirty percent of the gross national product (GNP). About seventy percent of the land is owned by companies and private estates, the balance belonging to small planters of the Indo-Mauritian community. The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement guarantees prices until 1974, but only about sixty percent is preferentially priced above world market prices. The industry accounts for economic progress, but efforts to lessen overdependence are being made.

Fluctuations in the national income and deterioration in the balance of payments occur because of fluctuations in the world price of sugar. The value of exports dropped from $77 million in 1963 to less than $55 million in 1967; in the same period the value of imports increased from $60 million to $66.8 million (see table 4). The objective of development plans has been to reduce the dependence on sugar by diversification of the economy. Some small, light industries have been developed as a result of government protection and stimulation, but the sugar industry continues to contribute over one-third of the GNP on a direct basis, and indirectly, over fifty percent.

The national income in 1968 was the equivalent of $148.32 million or somewhat below $200 per capita, a figure which has changed little in the 1960s. Indeed, the rapid increase of population has caused some decline in per capita income in recent years. Export trade was $55 million in 1967, chiefly with the United Kingdom.

Table 4. Value of Exports and Imports in Mauritius, 1963–67
(in millions of U.S. dollars)

	Exports	Imports
1963	77.0	60.0
1964	66.0	61.0
1965	56.4	66.1
1966	60.8	60.0
1967	54.9	66.8

Source: Adapted from *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1968–1969* and *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1970–1971.*

Port Louis is the capital, both administratively and commercially. It has a good harbor and almost all trade of the island passes through it. Muslim and Chinese merchants dominate trade. No figures on domestic trade are available.

Agriculture

Some 233,000 acres or about ninety percent of the total cultivated area is planted to sugar. Fluctuations in output occur with weather variations, e.g., 553,000 metric tons in 1961; 685,300 in 1963; 519,600 in 1964; 638,000 in 1967; and an estimated 650,000 in 1968. Seven hundred thousand metric tons is considered to be a limit.

Large well-equipped plantations with processing factories produce three-fifths of the total. About 26,000 small holders, mainly Indo-Mauritians, produce the balance. The sugar industry is highly organized; its mills are efficient, modern entities; it possesses a research institute in technological problems and supports units analyzing cost, production, and marketing problems.

In 1965, crops other than sugar were planted on 17,600 acres. Tea cultivation expanded and stood at 6,600 acres in this period, producing 2,000 tons of tea in 1966. A tea development project plans to have 15,000 acres cultivated in the 1970s. Tobacco is grown under allocation and production control of the Tobacco Board on 1,200 acres producing 2,100 tons (1967) for local consumption. Aloes fiber is produced on about 3,000 acres which yield about 1,600 tons. Food crops are being encouraged as foreign exchange savers. Among these, potatoes (9,000 tons) and onions (900 tons) were substantial in 1967. About 4,000 acres were planted between rows of sugar cane under the food crop encouragement program. Important livestock totals in 1967 were: dairy cattle, 40,000; goats, 68,000; and 1954, pigs, 3600; poultry, 450,000.

Thirty-eight percent of the total land area—over 160,000 acres—is forest land owned equally by state and private interests. The government has a forest maintenance and improvement policy.

Fisheries

Fish are plentiful within the reef surrounding most of the island and on the offshore shelf, but the fishing industry is relatively underdeveloped. A catch of about 1,200 tons in the mid-1960s was consumed locally. Efforts to develop the fishing industry are underway, including farming of freshwater fish.

Except for two deep-sea vessels, the industry technology and resources are quite simple. In the late 1960s about 2,800 fishermen with some 2,200 light fishing boats and some deep-sea pinnaces produced a catch of about 1,500 tons of fish worth about $800,000. The deep-sea catch of two vessels was valued at about $300,000. Oyster culture is being introduced experimentally. The Japanese have operated a fishing base since 1963, and collaboration with Japanese firms is planned.

The institutional structure of inshore industry reflects a commercial capitalism, operating through middlemen. These businessmen supply boats and equpiment to the fishermen who sell their catch to the middlemen at an agreed price. The middlemen make advances through periods of unemployment caused by weather. The government provides loans to finance the construction of new boats and the repair of cyclone-damaged boats.

Industry

The industries of Mauritius are largely processing industries based on the agricultural character of the economy. While soils are suitable for many kinds of tropical produce, the island may be described as a sugar plantation. Twenty-three factories for processing sugar exist. Sugar cane is purchased by the factories for thirty-two percent of the sugar and its by-products. A government control board approves the contracts. Molasses and alcohol are also manufactured, the greater part of the latter being consumed locally as rum.

Three other crops, tea, tobacco, and aloe fiber, are grown and processed on a smaller scale than sugar. Six tea factories were operating in the 1960s and two more government-owned plants are planned. Tobacco is grown in small plots by peasant cultivators. It is graded, mixed with imports, processed by The Tobacco Warehouse, and manufactured into cigarettes for local consumption by two companies, The British American Tobacco Co. Ltd. and the Amalgamated Tobacco Company. Aloe fiber is purchased by the government sack factory from ten fiber factories, producing over a thousand tons annually. The sack factory produces the bags for the sugar industry.

In addition to the above main industries, some small, local industries exist. They include engineering, printing, tanning, and the manufacture of rum, wine, edible oil, soap, cigarettes, soft drinks, dairy products, salt, lime, and bricks.

Since 1960, the government has tried to encourage industry by providing duty and tax concessions on imported manufacturing raw materials and financial assistance from the Development Bank. Increased depreciation and obsolescence allowances are available as incentives for investment. Tax concessions for new, larger scale industries are offered to attract business investment.

These incentives have resulted in local production of a variety of goods, such as car batteries, carbon dioxide, bituminous paints, nails, metal doors, windows, fiberglass manufactures, steel furniture, boot and furniture polish, and spring mattresses. A sawmill, brewery, and milk processing plant also have been established. About fifty new industries were started by 1967 and another twenty-five were planned. A Development Advisory Council helps develop policy on economic development, and has worked with outside agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Division.

There is some potential for using the island's relatively cheap but skilled labor in joint ventures with industrial countries. The Swiss have taken advantage of this opportunity to process jewels for watch-bearings. Except for tourism, however, industrial potential appears limited.

Labor

The number of persons employed by large organizations in 1967 was reported to be 139,000. Statistics on unemployment are not certain, but it is estimated at over fifteen percent of the labor force. It is well-known that population pressures force skilled workers to look outside for employment. A survey in 1967 reported employment of 139,000 persons broken down as follows: 57,000 in agriculture (sugar); 10,000 in manufacturing and construction; services 62,000 and the balance in various other industries.

In the mid-1960s daily wages varied from $0.88 to $2.52. At the beginning of 1968, depending on occupation and seniority, five and one-half day week averaging forty hours per week was normal. There were 104 registered trade unions with 53,000 members. Workman's compensation and social security laws are in force.

Vocational training has been a feature of government programs. There is an Industrial Trade Training Center, set up in 1968 with United Nations assistance, which trains personnel for many occupations. Much of the skilled labor goes abroad for work, however, and is lost to the island economy.

In spite of unemployment, absenteeism among workers on the sugar estates tends to be high, and there are actually shortages of labor in the crop season.

Currency and Banking

The unit of currency is the Mauritius rupee, divided into 100 cents. It is worth approximately $0.18 American. The Bank of Mauritius issues notes of Rs 50, 25, 10 and 5. Cupro-nickel coins of 1 rupee, half rupee, quarter rupee, and 10 cents, and bronze coins of smaller denomination are minted.

The Bank of Mauritius is the central bank, founded in 1966, with a capitalization of $1.8 million. The Development Bank of Mauritius was founded in 1936 as the Agricultural Bank, and reorganized in 1964 under its present name. It is capitalized at $7.0 million. It provides development loans to agricultural and industrial enterprises. There is a Postal Savings Bank; the Mauritius Cooperative Central Bank supports the cooperative structure, and the Mauritius Housing Corporation provides loans in its field. Five commercial banks include Barclays Bank Co., Baroda Bank, Habib Bank Overseas Ltd., The Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd. and the Mercantile Bank Ltd., with headquarters in Hong Kong. There are nine insurance companies. Eighty-one foreign company branches, of which forty-eight were British companies, were doing business in 1968.

Public Finance

Major deficits have occurred in the government's recent revenue and expenditure pattern (see table 5). Current expenditure has been rising, but current revenues have not risen as rapidly. (The 1964–65 figures reflect the bumper sugar crop of 1963.) The rapid increase in current expenditure is caused by the increase in social benefits. Expenditures for relief, for example, moved from $13.1 million in 1963–64 to $18.4 million in 1966–67, reflecting the rapid rise in population growth, which has not only made the population younger, but has increased the size of the potential labor force.

Table 5. Government Revenue and Expenditures in Mauritius, 1962–63 to 1968–69
(in millions of U.S. dollars)

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Expenditure	Balance
1962–63	29.2	30.2	−1.0
1963–64	33.2	32.6	0.6
1964–65	41.7	37.0	4.7
1965–66	32.8	38.5	−5.7
1966–67	35.9	39.8	−4.1
1967–68	41.8	41.8	0.1
1968–69	44.8	44.7	0.1

Source: Adapted from *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1968–1969* and *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1970–1971.*

Tax revenue varies with the sugar crop, lagging one year, and affects the collection of direct and indirect taxes (largely custom duties) which together account for over eighty percent of the tax revenues. Efforts are being made to restore a balanced budget by higher taxes and curtailment of expenditures.

The government's capital account has not shown any significant change on the expenditures side, averaging around ten million dollars for the mid-1960s. With deficits in the current budget, transfers to capital budget are no longer possible and heavy reliance on external sources of finance for development is necessary. Loans and grants from the United Kingdom have accounted for over seventy-five percent of external assistance during the five years ending in 1967. Two million dollars was borrowed from internal sources during 1966–67. Government capital expenditures results in the bulk of public sector investment, which is six percent of Gross Domestic Product, somewhat in decline from earlier levels.

Trade

Principal exports were sugar, totalling 579,000 metric tons valued at fifty-three million dollars in 1966 and 515,800 metric tons valued at fifty millon dollars in 1967.

In 1966, 127,500 tons of molasses valued at $2.07 million was exported, and in 1967, 97,000 tons worth $1.5 million was exported; 1,300 tons of tea with a value of $1.2 million was exported in 1966, and 1,600 tons worth $1.5 million was exported in 1967. The principal markets are the United Kingdom, which takes about eighty percent of the exports, the United States, Canada, and South Africa.

The major exchange earner after sugar, however, was tourism, which earned $2.9 million from 15,000 tourists in 1967. With improvement in air transportation, efforts are being made to attract tourists not only from Africa and Réunion (now fifty percent of the trade), but from Europe. Many persons who come now are in transit between Australia and South Africa, but potentials exist in low-cost charter flights from South Africa and Europe. Hotels are limited, with an estimated 500 bed capacity, but new hotels have been or are being built with government loans. Major attractions include the superb beaches, beautiful mountain scenery, the ideal climate, and the unusual blend of cultures. Distance from major centers of population, however, will remain a handicap.

Twenty-one percent of the imports came from the United Kingdom, and fifteen percent from Burma, accounted for $8.0 million in 1967. Electrical goods and machinery worth $1.2 million and fertilizers worth $3.6 million were imported in the same period. Wheat flour comes from Australia and France, beef on the hoof from the Malagasy Republic, and fertilizers from Britain, Italy, West Germany, France and South Africa. Britain is the chief source of manufactured goods such as textiles, machinery, automobiles, and hardware, but Japan is rising rapidly in importance.

British government financial aid has been the chief source of external assistance, providing a total of fourteen million dollars from 1946 to 1967. Special grants have also been made for housing reconstruction destroyed in the 1960 cyclone. Technical assistance in many fields is made available.

Grants of $7.9 million were agreed on for 1967–68 to permit balanced budgets in planned development. The Commonwealth countries provide experts, training facilities and scholarships. Private foundations such as the Nuffield Foundation and the United Nations also make some external assistance available.

SECURITY

The British garrison left Mauritius in 1960, thereby ending a stabilizing presence which had been in place for 150 years. Insomuch as the island remained under British control, external security was based upon English military forces. Internal security was to be provided by the creation of a Special Mobile Force, with six officers and 146 other ranks.

In August 1969, the regular armed police had a strength of 1,821 within an authorized level of 2,071. The Police Ordinance provides for the appointment of a Special Constabulary of up to 230 at any time. The regular police force was divided into special divisions including criminal investigation, riot control, traffic control, immigration and passports, and Water Police. The Water Police covered Port Louis Harbor with a strength of ten. Control of firearms was an additional task. The force used a motor launch, motor cycles, Land Rovers, vans, and cars. Communications was maintained by radio telephone between headquarters and fifty of the fifty-one out-stations.

In 1965 there were four penal or correctional facilities: one prison, a rehabilitation center, a minimum security youth institution, and an industrial school. The average total daily number of inmates of these institutions was about 630.

During May 1965, political disagreements led to disturbances. The Special Force and all regular police were deployed after three deaths (including that of one special constable) occurred. A state of emergency was declared and British troops which had been scheduled for a later training visit were brought in immediately. They were never deployed as the disturbances subsided soon after their arrival.

With independence in 1968, almost all internal security duties became the responsibility of the Mauritian Government. However, under the terms of the joint defense agreement announced on March 11, the British Government agreed to consultations concerning any future requests of the Mauritian Government for assistance in combating threats to internal security. The two governments also agreed to consultations in the event of external threats to either party. The agreement, which is to run initially for six years, also provided a pledge by the United Kingdom to train local security and police forces, if asked to do so.

The terms of the agreement may have been influenced to some extent by the occurrence of communal rioting in January of the same year. At that time the disturbances had been countered by the dispatch of British troops who soon restored order.

The United Kingdom retained rights and facilities at a communications center and an airfield. Since the granting of independence, and as part of its generally increasing presence in the Indian Ocean, the Soviet Union has obtained bunkering access for its trawlers and landing rights for aircraft transporting crews for Soviet fishing vessels.

CHAPTER 5

REUNION

The island of Réunion is an overseas *département* of France lying 420 miles east of the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) (see fig 5). It was first inhabited in the seventeenth century by French colonists who established sugar plantations and brought in African slaves as laborers. Sugar production still dominates the economy. The society is characterized by a proliferation of economic, social, and political divisions. At the same time, however, there are unifying forces such as the widespread use of Creole as a national language, the practice of Roman Catholicism by more than ninety percent of the population, and the general regard for France as the mother culture.

Réunion is densely populated and has a high birth rate. Industrialization is not far advanced, so the greater part of the labor force is in agriculture, services, and clerical positions. The level of literacy is sixty to seventy percent, but most workers are unskilled.

Like metropolitan France, Réunion has a multitude of political parties, acting at times in concert, at other times in serious disharmony. Of the principal ones, only the Réunion Communist Party (Parti Communiste Réunionnais—PCR) campaigns for dissolution of Réunion's status as a department. Economic dependence on the French community, access to French government services, and the strong cultural orientation to France, however, support the desire of the majority to stay within the Republic.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Uninhabited until the seventeenth century, the island was claimed by the French in 1649. The Compagnie des Indes Orientales (the French East Indies Company) was organized in 1664, and its activities, together with a native uprising in 1674 in Fort-Dauphin (Madagascar), led to the early colonization of Réunion. By 1715 there were 2,000 inhabitants, 900 were French, and 1,100 were African slaves, mostly from Madagascar. Throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century the population continued to grow as increasing numbers of French were attracted by the is-

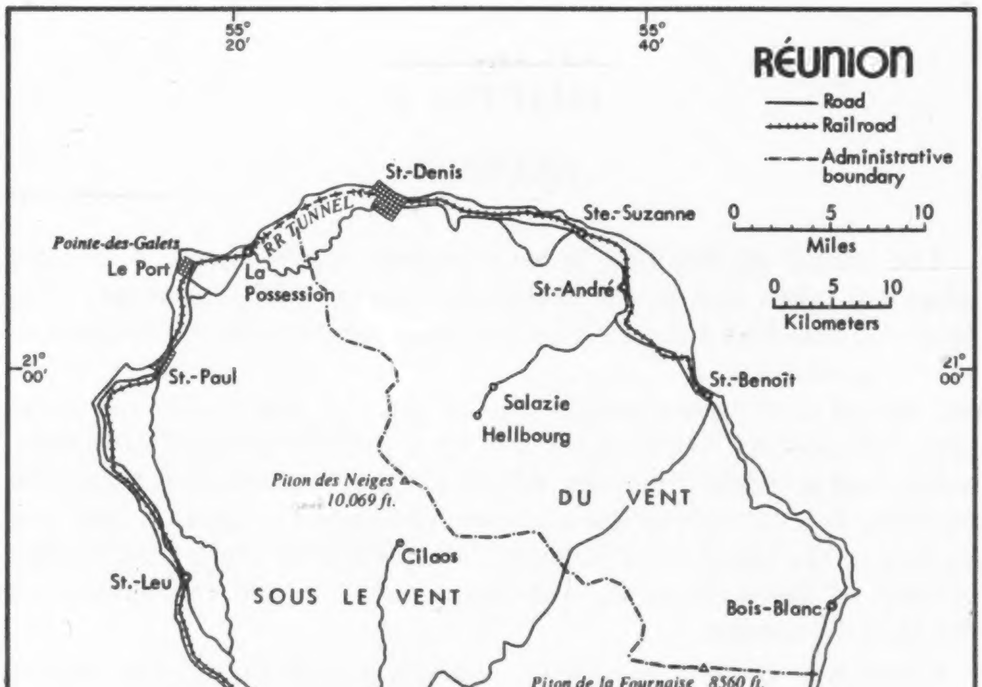
RÉUNION
Road
Railroad
Administrative boundary
0 5 10
Miles
0 5 10
Kilometers
55° 20′
55° 40′
21° 00′
21° 20′
St.-Denis
Ste.-Suzanne
Pointe-des-Galets
Le Port
RR TUNNEL
La Possession
St.-André
St.-Benoît
St.-Paul
Salazie
Hellbourg
Piton des Neiges 10,069 ft.
DU VENT
Cilaos
St.-Leu
SOUS LE VENT
Bois-Blanc
Piton de la Fournaise 8560 ft.
St.-Louis
Tremblet
St.-Pierre
St.-Joseph
Indian Ocean
10°
50°
60°
Farquhar Is.
Agalega I.
Comoro Islands
0 200 400
Kilometers
0 200 400
Miles
Indian Ocean
Tromelin I.
MAURITIUS
Cargados Carajos Is.
Madagascar
MALAGASY REPUBLIC
Mascarene Islands
Rodrigues I.
Réunion I.
Mauritius I.
20°

Figure 5. Réunion.

land's prosperity, and increasing numbers of slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique were imported. Indentured workers from India also began arriving during this period, but the major period of Indian immigration came later.

By 1804 there were 65,150 inhabitants—14,800 whites, and 50,350 blacks; inter-racial marriage at that time was forbidden by law. A group of poor whites was beginning to form as the result of individual economic failures and the system of inheritance, which passed the entire estate to the eldest son.

In 1818 the slave trade was suppressed. In 1830 there was a slave revolt, and thousands of Africans fled to the interior where they eked out an existence as small farmers and foresters. In 1848 the slaves, over 60,000 of them, were freed. Most of the freedmen refused to continue working on the plantations; many died, while many others joined by the Africans who returned to the lowlands after emancipation, became small holders and share croppers. The distaste of the former slaves for plantation work resulted in a tremendous labor shortage. Workers were recruited from East Africa and Madagascar. In 1860 Great Britain opened up India to recruitment of indentured laborers. From 1860 to 1885 between 3,000 and 5,000 workers immigrated every year from the Malabar coast (the west coast) of India. In 1885 the British stopped the flow of indentured workers because of allegations of mistreatment of the workers.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, economic pressures forced increasing numbers of whites into poverty. Disliking plantation labor and wishing to remain apart from the blacks, they began moving up into the inland highlands and valleys, there to eke out a precarious existence. In this period, and following it into the twentieth century, Indian Muslims, Chinese, and a few Vietnamese came to exploit the grocery, retail, and import-export trades.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The small eliptical-shaped island is forty-four miles long by thirty-one miles wide, with a total area of 970 square miles. Most of the population and the arable land on the island is concentrated on the narrow plain that encircles the central mountainous massif. The volcanic core of the island is divided into two parts by a high, undulating plateau that extends across the island in a southwest-northeast direction. To the northwest of the plateau is the Piton des Neiges, an eroded peak 10,066 feet high, surrounded by three large bowl-shaped valleys called "cirques," arranged in a pattern resembling a three-leaf clover. To the southwest of the plateau, amid a barren landscape, is the active volcano, Piton de la Fournaise (8,560 feet), which periodically emits a pyrotechnic display of smoke and glowing lava. The most recent eruption was in 1961. Damage to property and crops, however, is more likely to result from the passage of cyclonic storms across or near the island.

A band of natural vegetation—forest and brush—follows the 4,500-foot contour line around the island. Above the band the natural vegetation becomes more stunted and sparse. Below that level most of the natural vegetation has been replaced by commercial crops.

The economy of the island is overwhelmingly agricultural, based primarily on plantations of sugarcane, with significant contributions from oils used for perfume fixatives and on the production of Bourbon vanilla. The amount of arable land on the island is limited to about 175 square miles, an inadequate amount of land upon which to base both the food supply and the cash crops needed to support the island's present and fast-multiplying population. As a result of the high percentage of land devoted to sugarcane, much of the island's staple foods must be imported.

Efforts are under way to exploit the remaining major resource of the island—its natural beauty. Construction of additional hotel space and other facilities designed to encourage tourism is planned. A major obstacle to development of tourism is the location of Réunion in the southern Indian Ocean far removed from usual tourist travel lanes.

Transportation and Communication

Réunion is served by regular international air flights of Air France and Air Madagascar that connect the local Gillot airfield, six miles outside Saint Denis, the capital, with major air terminals in East Africa and Madagascar. Several flights a week link up with airlines serving Mauritius. Both passenger and merchant marine vessels ply between Pointe-des-Galets and ports in France and in East Africa, but because of the great distances involved, most passenger traffic is by air.

All of the towns on Réunion except Saint-André are coastal. There are many settlements, however, on the section of the plain that extends northwest from Saint-Pierre to Saint-Denis in the north, Saint-André in the northeast, and as far as Saint-Benoît on the east coast. Lower densities are found in the remaining southern and southeastern coastal regions. There is only one port, however—a small harbor in a broken crater on the northwest coast near Pointe-des-Galets. Coastal waters around the island are generally deep with few areas suitable for anchoring, and with few headlands to provide shelter from prevailing winds.

There are about 1,300 miles of road on Réunion, including more than 850 miles of bitumenized highway. The main roads are the circular coastal highway, a route that bisects the central plateau, and roads from coastal areas that climb the slopes and descend into two of the cirque valleys surrounding Piton des Neiges. The scenic routes not only constitute a tourist attraction, but also provide access to the few villages located in the cool highlands. The villages are important mainly for vacationing inhabitants of Réunion during the summer months of December through March, and for their potentialities as tourist attractions.

POPULATION AND LABOR FORCE

Population Structure

The latest official census, made in October 1967, found 416,525 inhabitants in Réunion. This exceeded by about 2,000 the United Nations estimate for that year. The latest official United Nations estimate shows the population to be 426,000, making a density of 439 per square mile.

About half of the population is less than twenty years old, and about one-fourth is of school age (six to sixteen). Together with an estimated five percent of aged persons (sixty-five and over) this makes a large non-working population dependent on services and school facilities and not contributing to the economy. Breakdowns of population according to sex were not available.

The population is concentrated in the coastal lowlands. In 1965, Saint-Denis had 75,126 inhabitants, Saint-Paul had 39,194, Saint-Pierre had 38,874, and Saint-Louis had 27,676.

Population Dynamics

The crude birth rate for 1968 was 37.3 per thousand, based on the registration of 15,857 births in that year. In the same year, the crude death rate was 8.8 per thousand; there were 3,763 deaths registered. The result is a natural rate of increase of 28.5 per thousand. Incomplete evidence indicates an emigration rate of around six or seven per cent, making a total rate of increase of about 22.0 per thousand per year.

The high birth rate results not so much from religious convictions as from ignorance and poverty. Despite opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, family planning centers have been opened on the island. These provide contraceptives, and conduct propaganda campaigns for the limitation of families. The most effective methods of contraception—sterilization and the pill—have not been successful, however, because people are afraid to use them.

Both metropolitan France and the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) are able to absorb migrants from Réunion. Considered for many years, migration to France was given impetus in 1961 by Deputy Michel Debré. The Bureaux de Migration des Departements d' Outre-mer (BUMIDOM) organizes emigration, publicizes it, provides training for potential migrants, pays their passage, and finds jobs for them. Emigrants to France increased from 135 in 1962 to 2,577 in 1966. Madagascar, a French colony until 1958, continues to receive numerous migrants from Réunion.

ETHNIC GROUPS, LANGUAGES, AND RELIGION

Ethnic Groups

Census figures are not available for most of the various ethnic groups. Relative proportions and salient characteristics can be assessed, however.

The mixed Africans are perhaps the largest ethnic group, ranging in color from dark brown to nearly white. Forming a relatively large subgroup of the population, they tend to be restricted to small scale farming, plantation labor and in urban areas, to miscellaneous poorly paid jobs. Some have been able to acquire clerical positions. Largely descended from the Africans imported as slaves, they have adopted much French culture, speak Creole as their native language, and are Roman Catholics.

The name Creole originally referred to a person of European descent born in a colony. The word has also come to mean a person of mixed European and African descent, especially when the skin color is light.

The Europeans are few in number, but they are separated by a gap in culture and social standing from the Creoles. They are the wealthy landholders and factory owners, they have the highest prestige, and they control the island's politics. The Europeans have retained French culture in its purest form, taking pride in speaking French rather than Creole, and maintaining the institutions of the mother country.

Some poor Europeans until the last quarter century inhabited only the interior regions, where they lived as foresters or farmers. Since Réunion became an overseas department many have forsaken their isolation for a chance at lowland economic opportunities, and have begun to intermarry with the Africans. Poor, isolated, uneducated, and undernourished, these descendants of the original French settlers have little in common with the other Europeans.

Another white ethnic group is comprised of the metropolitan French. Present in increasing numbers since departmentalization, they are temporary residents on assignment as technicians and other government functionaries. As a middle class in competition with the Creoles, they provide an alternative cultural model to the other Europeans.

The Chinese form a close community, adhering for the most part to Chinese culture, although many have become Roman Catholic. Most of them are in the grocery or small retail trade, or operate small taverns. They run their businesses largely on easy credit, and their extended family ties give them a great advantage in business. They rarely intermarry with members of other ethnic groups.

About 6,000 Indian Muslims from the Gujarat (Bombay) area have specialized in large scale business operations. Like the Chinese, they have tended to adhere to their old traditions, but unlike them, few have become Christian.

The remaining Indians constitute one of the larger ethnic groups. Most of them are cane-field workers, and they are the descendants of the nineteenth century indentured laborers from India. They are Catholic, but they have retained many old Hindu customs, and many of them are familiar with their old Tamil language.

Various groups are ranked vertically, and each has its niche in the economic structure. At the same time, marriage between groups is fairly frequent.

Languages

French is the official language. It is used in the courts, in government operations, and as the medium of instruction in the schools. It is the original language of the Europeans and all others who aspire to French status.

Creole, the mother tongue of the vast majority of Réunionnais and lingua franca among ethnic groups, is derived from French, but most linguists consider it to be a separate language. Like other Creole languages, Réunionnais Creole developed in an overseas colonial situation where numbers of Europeans and Africans were required to communicate with one another, and where they were somewhat isolated from the linguistic wellsprings in Europe. It is a product of the plantation system. Creole grammar is more or less a simplified version of French grammar. Words have been borrowed from Malagasy and other African languages, and French words have been given different senses.

Largely unwritten, Creole is spoken and loved by most Réunionnais, but lacks the prestige of French, the language of culture and refinement. Some people have an ambivalent attitude toward

Creole, perhaps because of its origins in slavery, and because it is not French, but to them merely an approximation to French.

The few thousand Chinese in the island are mostly from the southern part of China, and the Chinese dialects in Réunion are thus mainly southern. Because the Chinese are a relatively closed community, mixing but little with other ethnic groups, and because they find it expedient to use Chinese in business, most Chinese still speak their language as well as Creole or French. The linguistic tradition is one of the many ways in which the Chinese maintain their ethnic distinctiveness.

The Muslims from Gujarat use Arabic only as a liturgical language. Their language, Gujarati, is Indo-European, and thus distantly related to English and French. It is often written with a modification of the Arabic script, and contains numerous loan words from Arabic and Persian. Most of the Muslims are also proficient in Creole or French.

Many of the Indians still speak their traditional Tamil language, although many others know only Creole. Tamil is one of the Dravidian languages of south India and Ceylon, and is not at all related to Gujarati or other Indo-European languages. Written with a distinctive script, Tamil is still taught at special Tamil cultural centers in Réunion.

Religion

About ninety-four per cent of the population (431,820) is Roman Catholic. Catholicism was introduced into the island with the original French settlement, and Réunion became a diocese in 1850. There are sixty-three parishes, and the bishop has his See in Saint-Denis. The Vatican is represented by an apostolic delegate, a papal representative without diplomatic status. Fifty-eight diocesan and sixty religious (members of orders) priests serve the people; there are also 462 women religious, 108 men religious, and 28 seminarians. The church maintains 33 schools, with a total of 10,124 pupils. Roadside shrines are found throughout the island.

The number of clergy is inadequate. For many Réunionnais Sunday Mass is a social occasion, a time to see and be seen. Many also believe in magic and in various spirits not sanctioned by the church.

Catholicism is represented among all ethnic groups with the exception of the Muslims. Virtually without exception the Europeans and the Creoles are Catholic. Most of the Chinese are also Catholic, but the Indians constitute a special case. Their religion appears to be an amalgam of Catholicism and Hinduism. The people attend Mass, but they practice old rites and hold processions on Hindu holidays. Catholic clergy wage an intensive campaign to eradicate the Hindu practices of the Indians.

The Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. Because being Muslim is such an integral part of their identity they have resisted conversion and tend to be pious and correct. The traditional Five Pillars of Islam—the confession of faith, the five daily prayers and the congregational prayers on Friday, the fast during the month of Ramadan, the giving of alms to the needy, and the pilgrimage to Mecca (if possible)—remain the basis of Muslim life in Réunion. Islamic holidays include the 'Id al-Fitr which terminates the fast, the 'Id al-Adha which commemorates the Pilgrimage and the sacrifice of Abraham, and the Islamic New Year. Réunionnais Muslims have both mosques and Qur'an schools for their people.

Some of the Chinese are not Catholic, but adhere to traditional Chinese religions. There is a Taoist and a Buddhist temple in Saint-Denis.

The African heritage of much of the population is reflected in the practice of voodoo and other cults involving magic and spirits. Conjurers are believed to be able to bring forth evil spirits or to cause harm to people.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Réunionnais culture and society have been shaped not only by the particular traditions brought by the various colonists, but also by the exigencies of history, particularly the plantation system and the isolation of the island from metropolitan France. The culture is basically European, but there are influences from Africa and India. The plural heritage and more particularly the poverty of many Réunionnais have had a marked effect upon the conditions of life.

Ethnic groups are stratified and occupy particular places in the economic structure. The Western European or nuclear family type remains an ideal only partly realized, either because of an alternative cultural tradition or because of economic conditions. It is only since Réunion became a department that the educational system and living conditions have begun to be modernized.

Social Structure

In the native system of evaluation, wealth, power, approximation to French culture, education and occupation, and color contribute to the ranking of individuals and groups within the system. The use of multiple criteria of evaluation makes difficult an assessment of all groups into a single scale. The Muslims, for example, tend to be well to do, but their small number makes them weak politically. The Chinese are a similarly anomalous group.

Most features of the system, however, are clear. At the top of the social scale are the local wealthy Europeans. They are the big land and factory owners. They speak French and can afford to keep in close touch with cultural developments in France, so that of all the local groups they are the most French in culture. Because of their wealth and prestige, they are also the most powerful politically.

The metropolitan French, holding positions as bureaucrats or technical and medical personnel within the French civil service, constitute a well-to-do middle class. They also wield considerable political power.

The poor Europeans eke out an existence with farming, forestry, and handicrafts. Although of more or less unmixed French ancestry, they are Creole in culture. They speak Creole and tend to be poorly educated. Their family life also fails to correspond to the ideal, for consensual unions are common among them. It is only in the possession of French ancestry and light skin color that they can distinguish themselves from the Africans. Despite their pride in descent, as they move into urban areas, they often intermarry with the mixed Africans.

The Indians and the Africans are at the bottom of the scale. They are the cane-field workers, factory workers, the sharecroppers, and the unemployed of the suburban shantytowns. In this hierarchy the Muslims may be placed between the wealthy Europeans and the metropolitan French. The Chinese rank at about the same level as the metropolitan French, or perhaps slightly lower.

The system is not entirely rigid; social mobility is possible for many. Rural agricultural workers often move to the city in the hope of finding more remunerative work or giving their families greater chance for education. Few are successful, but the exodus from the country continues. Success in business or education together with a government job, plus the acquisition of French culture, are the means to higher social position. Those attempting to move upward substitute French for Creole, attend Mass more regularly, get married instead of living in a consensual union, send their children to the best schools, try to acquire the material evidence of middle class status, and claim a French background. This last claim is the most plausible when made by the lighter of the mixed Africans, many of whom are in competition with the metropolitan French for government positions and middle class standing. There is no official color bar in Réunion, no elaborate and official classification of individuals by race; but instead, the nearly endless variations of color and other indications of prestige form a complex system of ranking.

Family

The nuclear family, consisting of a married couple and their unmarried children, with a patrilineal and patriarchal bias, is the ideal, receiving sanction from Catholic teachings and long-standing European tradition. This ideal is achieved in the middle and upper classes by families whose social position is partly determined by its realization. Among the poor and those of non-European tradition, other family types are also common.

Among the lower classes, consensual unions without marriage are common. These may be of varied duration, some being as permanent as marriage, but others being rather short in term. They seem to result from the inability to pay for weddings, the reluctance of many to assume the responsibilities of marriage, or the refusal of the Church to recognize divorce. Households may be headed by women; they may be composed of brothers and sisters or other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, or cousins, may join the family household. Economic considerations rather than preference seem to be the governing factors.

The patrilineal extended family is a common form among the Chinese and Muslims, where it harmonizes not only with their cultural traditions but also with their business operations. The patrilineal extended family consists of a married couple, their unmarried children, their married sons with their wives and children, and perhaps any other relatives who have no other place. Members of these two ethnic groups find relatives the most trustworthy business associates and use ties of descent and marriage to form business networks. Both Islam and ancient Chinese customs sanction large family groupings. In both traditions, too, the father is the head of the household. Sons are free to leave home when grown, but they often find it to their advantage to remain with their families. Divorce or repudiation is also possible for both groups, but is not frequent.

Social Values

Values stem mainly from two cultural traditions, the European and the African. The European or French tradition is the source of most ideals, such as those of marriage and the nuclear family, eating and dressing well, attending Mass, and cultivating the intellect. In the French tradition, it is reason which distinguishes man from the lower animals, and for the average person this belief results in politeness and circumspection in all affairs. There is also the ideal of frugality, but this tradition has been partly obscured by the Réunionnais situation which produces a tendency to spend freely and enjoy while there is money, but not to save for a time when there is none. The African tradition seems to manifest itself most in the enjoyment of the arts, the dance, and folklore, and perhaps also in the generally cheerful outlook.

Dependence on the will of employers for employment and other material benefits has resulted in a certain obsequiousness and humility in manner. The cults of magic also seem to be a response to the precariousness of existence. Illness and other misfortunes are attributed to spirits and other evil forces; recourse is had to sorcerers to counteract these or to conjure them up for use against others. The magical cults provide both an explanation for disaster and a means of coping with it. Because people are in competition for rather limited economic resources, hostility results; this must generally be concealed, but finds an outlet in sorcery. The voodoo cult similarly serves as an outlet, for it enables the insignificant to perform important roles within the cult.

Living Conditions

The tropical climate and economic conditions contribute to the major health problems. Malnutrition is endemic among the poorest people; meat and other protein sources are expensive, as is fuel. Tuberculosis often appears to compound the problems of malnutrition and alcoholism. In addition to alcoholism, complaints such as asthma and ulcers are common. Sanitary conditions are poor because of inadequate government facilities and poor habits on the part of the populace. The general result is a high incidence of water-borne parasitic diseases, which wreak particular havoc among infants. The infant mortality rate in 1968 was 59.3 per thousand, based on a registration of 941 infant deaths. On the positive side, malaria has been virtually eradicated by the spraying of DDT, and other tropical diseases, such as yellow fever, are rare.

Hindrances in the struggle against disease are the poor education and presence of magical beliefs among the population, the inadequate quantity of medical personnel and facilities, and an approach to medical problems that neglects prevention in favor of therapy. Nevertheless, progress has been made, particularly in the years since Réunion became an overseas department. Hospital care is provided in one central hospital in Saint-Denis, with 853 beds, and six others, one of which is public, and one of which is a psychiatric hospital. Eighty dispensaries, both public and private are to be found throughout the island; many of these specialize in particular problems such as venereal disease or tuberculosis. The government and the International Red Cross operate Centres de

Protection Maternelle et Infantile to care for expectant women, mothers, and small children. The Département de la Santé Publique is in charge of maintaining health facilities, supplying medical personnel, and seeing to sanitation conditions. The Roman Catholic Church is the second major force in health care. Except for midwives, medical personnel must be trained abroad, and few of them care to practice in rural areas; the lack of doctors and nurses in rural areas continues to be a problem.

The local foods essentially constitute an adequate diet, except that few can afford protein foods. The scarcity of fuel often causes people to eat their food raw. Curries of lentils and other vegetables with rice are the dietary mainstay. *Brèdes creoles,* a dish of stewed spiced greens, is a typical favorite. Dishes are often seasoned with small fish or with *rougail,* a mixture of spices and other chopped seasonings. Meat or chicken is rarely eaten except on holidays. Tropical fruits, red wine, and rum round out the diet. Meat and other foods such as flour must be imported because the local production is inadequate, and the resultant high prices for food contribute to the dietary problems of Réunion.

Rural houses are usually made of thatch or wattle and daub. Small and smoky, they nevertheless afford adequate protection from the mild weather except in the coldest seasons. Year by year corrugated iron becomes a more popular roofing material. Recent migrants from the country to the suburbs make their houses from sheet iron, wood, and anything else suitable. Members of the middle and upper classes build more substantial structures of wood or stone, with many rooms and much furniture. Both clothing and household furnishings vary in style and amount with the means of the owners, but are European in type.

The island has fourteen movie theaters, which, however, are not well attended. Other forms of recreation include sports and dancing. The Creole *Sega,* of African origin, is the national dance. Boisterous and exciting, it is found among all levels of society. Religious holidays with their processions and the Sunday and evening promenades also provide amusement.

Assistance to the aged and other needy persons is administered by the Department of Labor, which also takes care of workmen's compensation and aid to families. The Catholic Church is active in welfare, aiding the needy and sheltering orphans.

Creativity

The isolation and poverty of Réunion have not on the whole been conducive to a flourishing of the arts and intellectual endeavour. Nevertheless, some Réunionnais have contributed to French and international culture. Well-known poets include Evariste-Désiré de Forges de Parny (1753–1814), who wrote in the sentimental style favored at that time; Antoine de Bertin (1752–1790), Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894), elected to the French Academy; Léon Dierx, Auguste Lacaussade, and Ambroise Volland. Prose writers include Joseph Bédier (1864–1939), and the journalist and novelists Ary and Marius Leblond, born in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The physician, Félix Guyon (1831–1920), a pioneer in modern urology, was also from Réunion.

Almost all higher education must be obtained abroad. Réunion has two public museums and two public libraries. Intellectuals have formed a number of special interest associations, while the common people have created a vast folklore in Creole. Embroidery and other handicrafts in Cilaos and other valleys has attained a high degree of artistry.

Education

The educational system is modelled after that of France. Education is compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen, and authorities hope to have all children in school by the early 1970s. Children may attend preschool from two to six. At six they enter the primary school, which lasts five years, until they are eleven. At this time the child makes a choice whether to continue in an academic program with the goal of teacher training or higher education, or to opt for limited academic work followed by vocational training. The academic secondary program lasts for seven years, until the student is eighteen. In both the teacher training and vocational programs, the child continues in an academic program until he is fifteen, and then enters two or three years of vocational training, or four years of teacher training. Higher education must be pursued abroad, and Réunion is affiliated with the Université d'Aix-Marseille in metropolitan France.

In 1966 twenty-nine public preschools had a total enrollment of 8,129 pupils; there were also several private nursery schools. In the same year there were 352 primary schools, with an enrollment of 86,784 children. There were three *lycées* (academic secondary schools) in 1965, although construction of additional ones was planned; enrollment was 18,425 in 1966. Two technical training schools and an agricultural school had an enrollment of 664 pupils in 1966, and there were 295 pupils in the teacher training college. Since 1948 the Public Health Department has offered midwife training, which is poorly attended. It also offers laboratory technology training at its hospital in Saint-Denis. About 1,000 students go abroad every year for higher education.

Instruction is entirely in French, although most of the pupils come to school speaking only Creole, and many of the Creole teachers do not speak French well. Great emphasis is placed on rote learning and examinations. To attain the primary school certificate (the *brevet*), or the academic secondary certificate (the *baccalauréat*), the student must be successful in a competitive examination. Curriculum and textbooks are designed for use in metropolitan France, with the result that they are often not meaningful to the Réunionnais students. There is a high rate of absenteeism and a high turnover among teachers. Education is highly regarded for its prestige and as a passport to middle class occupations. Despite the progress made in education since departmentalization, there was in 1968 an illiteracy rate of about thirty to forty percent.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Governmental System

Although Réunion is about 5,500 air miles from Marseille, it is politically an integral part of Metropolitan France. As an overseas department, Réunion's administrative structure resembles those of the departments in continental France. A department is the largest political subdivision within the country, and is, in turn, divided into arrondissements, cantons, and communes.

As with all departments of France, Réunion's governor is a Prefect, appointed by the national Minister of the Interior. The island elects three deputies to the French National Assembly, and two representatives to the Senate. Réunion also elects its own local representative assembly, called the General Council, and its own mayors and municipal councilors.

Réunion is divided administratively into two arrondissements of approximately equal size. The line between them runs along the northwest-southeast watershed axis of the island. The northern arrondissement is known as the Windward, the southern as the Leeward. Each is subdivided into about twelve cantons.

The canton and the municipality are the smallest political subdivisions of the island for which officials are directly selected by popular suffrage. The commune, the smallest political unit of Réunion, has no elected officials, but is represented by the canton of which it is a member. As the privilege of voting extends to all adult citizens of France, commune residents protect their communal interests by voting in municipal and cantonal elections.

Laws passed by the French National Assembly, that apply to Réunion as a department, are executed by the Prefect. Laws applying only to the department's peculiar needs are made by the 36-member General Council. The Council's president, whom the Council itself elects, is the executor of local legislation.

Political Dynamics

Réunion's communists have continually increased the degree of autonomy they advocate for the island since 1959 when the Parti Communiste Réunionnais (PCR) was formally named. In 1967, the PCR stated its goal as the attainment of a degree of separation from France short of losing the economic benefits of belonging to the Republic. In 1968, the Réunion Communist Party made a formal declaration calling for Réunion's national independence. In 1969, the Party became even more insistent on this point and formed a "liberation front" organization to agitate for Réunion's separation from France.

Shortly before the municipal and cantonal by-elections of December 1969, communist organizations including the National Liberation Front of Réunion (NLFR), the Autonomist Youth Front of Réunion (AYFR), the Réunion General Confederation of Labor (RGCL), and the Party's newspaper *Témoignages* launched such a vigorous separationist campaign that government officials felt constrained to take measures to prevent expected violence at the ballot-boxes. An official committee for the Normal Evolution of the Election Proceedings successfully kept the peace, however.

PCR organizations continued to proliferate between the December 1969 by-elections and the general elections of mid-March 1970. The AYFR, the PCR, the RGCL, the Solidarity Committee, and the Women's Confederation of Labor bound together to form the Réunionese Peace Committee (RPC), but the Communists polled less than 50 percent of the electorate. The RPC joined the World Peace Council, and sent representative to meetings of the World Peace Conference in East Berlin, North Korea, Moscow, and Khartoum.

In March 1970 the PCR's Young Workers' Center announced the opening of the Réunionese Information, Study, and Social Action Center for Young Workers. The Information Center's alleged purpose was to study problems relative to the vocational, social, and cultural life of young workers. Following the March elections, Réunion's General Council appointed a Communist Party member to the government's Committee for General and Social Affairs, giving the party an official position from which to pursue its Social Action Center programs.

PCR activities did not diminish following the March elections. In mid-April a representative of the Party went to Moscow to attend the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth. The RGCL issued a public statement praising "the heroic effort of the Vietnamese people to chase the American imperialists from their territory." The General Confederation of Labor also called for a general strike on May 4 to supplement a building-workers' strike that had been in effect since April 23. On July 14, *Témoignages* published a telegram from the Vietnam Workers Party thanking the PCR for its congratulatory message on the occasion of Ho Chi Minh's 80th anniversary.

The amount of activity by the PCR during 1970 would seem to belie the party's actual strength. In 1967, *L'Humanité* reported PCR membership at 3,500. In the 1968 elections, Deputy Michel Debré and the UDR (Union des Democrates pour la Vème République) polled 33,382 votes against the PCR's 5,523. In the by-elections of December 1969, communist candidates reportedly received only ten percent of the votes in Saint-André, an area which had previously elected a communist deputy. In the Saint-Pierre cantonal elections, in March 1970, the PCR won two out of three offices, but these were its only successes out of nineteen candidates in the island-wide contests.

Even the few Communist victories cannot be accounted for, however, on the basis of PCR membership. In Saint-André, for example, the December 1969 municipal elections returned 4,369 valid ballots, of which Paul Verges, the PCR secretary-general, received almost half. In the cantonal election, Verges again received almost half of the 2,724 votes. In the island-wide legislative elections of 1967, Verges received some 18,000 out of the 43,000 votes cast in one of Réunion's three electoral districts.

Other political parties, such as the Gaullist Union of Democrats for the Republic, the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left, and the frequent independent aspirants do not have fixed constituencies. Voting crosses party lines. Not every party has a candidate for every election. Persons other than PCR members vote for communist candidates, and PCR members occasionally vote for non-party candidates. Individuals running for public office are identified as much by political position (for example, a "centrist") as they are by political party. As the editor of the anti-communist *Le Progres* said, the electorate decides on the basis of a candidate's ability to provide public services. Even communists vote for non-communist officials of proven worth.

Of all the issues that complicate Réunion's sovereign interests, the communist-imposed insistence on separation from France causes the greatest divisiveness. Other parties and other candidates are concerned primarily with improving Réunion's economy to make the island's place in the Republic of France a more secure one. After 1968, the PCR equated the department's poverty and unemployment with "colonialism," by which was meant Réunion's political association with France.

Legal System

The judicial courts of France are arranged according to the several types of cases recognized in the nation's legal system. Civil courts handle suits between individuals. Criminal courts judge alleged misdemeanor offenses against statutory laws. The courts of assize have jurisdiction over major felonies, and commercial courts receive trade and business litigation. There are also courts devoted solely to cases involving the government, or to cases involving public officials in the execution of their duties.

As an overseas department, Réunion does not have the full quota of courts allotted to departments in metropolitan France. It does have access, however, to the entire legal system of the French republic. On the island itself there are civil and criminal courts with the customary courts of appeals for each.

Public Information

Three daily papers and six weeklies are published in Saint-Denis. Another weekly is published in Saint-Pierre. The Communist paper, *Témoignages*, claims a circulation of 5,000, but there is no data on the others.

A government radio and television station is administered by Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française. It broadcasts on a daily basis. There were 54,000 radios and 14,400 television sets in 1969.

ECONOMY

Character and Structure

In spite of being called "The Perfume Island" because it is the source of perfume essences, Réunion may be characterized as a single crop economy devoted to sugar. Seventy percent of the total cultivated land consists of sugar plantations, and almost eighty percent of the exports are sugar. Sugar refining, rum distilling and perfume essences (oils) are the principal export industries. Tropical fruits are also provided in small quantities. Exports worth the equivalent of over $41 million dollars were recorded in 1968, but imports in the same period were $112 million with a consequent heavy imbalance. Industrial equipment and food are imported with France and Madagascar as principal trading partners. There is an aid program from France, reported to have been about $8 million in 1966.

Agriculture

The predominant characteristic of agriculture is its heavy concentration in commercial crops, especially sugarcane. The adaptability of the sugarcane plant to the volcanic soil of the island was the original impetus to settlement and development. Sugarcane is planted everywhere that growing conditions permit—on 119,000 acres (48,000 hectares)—but the cooler temperatures at higher elevations restrict its cultivation to the coastal plains.

Rum and perfume essences are major exports. The perfume essences are derived from plants such as geranium and vetiver and are second only to sugar as revenue earners. Geranium grows on land at elevations of 2,500 feet on the southern part of the plateau. Vetiver is concentrated in the southern part of the island between Le Tampon and Saint-Joseph. Other perfume plants, including ilang-ilang, patchouli, and "longose" (Hedychium gardnerianum), also are grown, but their production is small.

The island is not self-sufficient in foodstuffs and much of it must be imported. Corn, for example, is grown on 15,000 to 17,000 acres. Production varies between 10,000 and 15,000 tons per year, but this quantity meets only half the population's needs. Among other plants grown for local consumption are tobacco and tropical fruits such as bananas, mangos, and avocados. Manioc, agave, and coconuts also are grown. Vanilla has been grown in the past, but its importance is declining. Tea is being cultivated on an experimental basis.

The livestock population in 1968 was reported as 40,000 cattle, 70,000 swine, and 17,500 sheep and goats. Stockraising and fishing are not adequate to meet the island's need, and consequently meat must be imported. Beef and pork production were put at 1,500 tons each in the early 1960s. There is a program to improve the livestock at a stock raising center which has been organized by the Veterinary Service, and attempts to introduce purebred stock have had encouraging results.

Forest land is covered with rosewood, ebony, and ironwood. Other tropical hardwoods are found in the forest near the coasts. Forests occupy about 338,000 acres.

Fisheries

Migratory fish, especially tuna, are found in abundance off the coasts. An annual catch of some 400 tons has been reported. Hundreds of small craft, most of them motorized and manned by five to six hundred fishermen, bring in the catch. The catch is inadequate to meet the needs of the islanders, however, and additional fish are imported.

Industry and Industrial Potentials

The predominantly agricultural character of the economy limits industrial development to processing industries. Sugar refining, rum distilling, and processing of oil or perfume essences are the key industries producing the exports. There are also two canneries, a foundry, and a chocolate factory. In 1961, 450 enterprises were reported in the island, most of them being engaged in handicrafts. A tea-processing plant was opened at Saint-Denis early in the same year. There also are factories for preparing tapioca and manioc.

The sugar industry produces sugar and its derivatives, rum and molasses. Seven enterprises own the island's thirteen cane-processing and rum-distilling plants. The plants are reported to be well equipped and modern. They process the cane production of some 21,000 planters. About 2.8 million tons of sugar was exported in 1968; the comparable figures for 1967 and 1966 were 2.1 million and 2.2 million, respectively.

Electricity is produced by four power stations, three thermal and one hydraulic. The total capacity was estimated at 8,500 kilowatts in the early 1960s. Three central diesel-powered generators are located at Saint-Denis, Le Port, and Saint-Pierre. The Langevin River has been harnessed at Saint-Joseph.

Potentials for new industries would appear to exist in the 1,300 miles of main and secondary roads on Réunion, about two-thirds of which are hard surfaced. There is also a telephone system with 11,345 phones in 1968.

In 1967, there were visits to the island by 345 ships, of which about a third were French. With these facilities, tourism is an obvious possibility. Other industries have been promoted through the Social and Economic Equipment Plan for the Overseas Departments of Finance.

There are eight private trade and industry associations in Saint-Denis which have interests in commercial development potentials. These are: Bureau de Promotion Industrielle, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de la Réunion, Jeune Chambre Economique, Société de Developpement Economique, Syndicat des Commerçants, Syndicat des Fabricants de Sucre de l'Ile de la Réunion, Syndicat des Producteurs de Rhum de l'Ile de la Réunion, and Syndicat des Travaux Publics et du Bâtiment.

Labor

In 1967 agriculture provided employment for 20,000 persons, and for 19,500 industrial workers, most of whom were employed in the sugar, rum or perfume processing industries. Commerce provided work for 3,961 persons; administration, 8,372 persons; and domestic service, 12,000 persons. Data were not available on the size of entire labor force.

The total of 63,833 employed persons reported for 1967 was probably higher in 1971. The population was estimated in 1970 at about 430,000, having experienced an average annual growth rate of 2.9 percent during the 1961–68 period. Per capita gross national product was placed at $610 in 1968 and it is growing slightly faster at 4.4 percent. Thus while population pressure was heavy, it apparently had not outrun rising production as in other countries.

In addition to the paucity of natural resources and isolation from the rest of the French republic, the low level of skills in the working population inhibits economic development (see Culture and Society in this chapter).

The trade union movement is part of that of Metropolitan France. There are local branches of the three major French national trade unions: The General Confederation of Labor-Workers' Force (Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière—CGT–FO), the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail—CFDT), and the General Confederation of Labor (Confédération Générale du Travail—CGT). Through their headquarters in France, they are affiliated respectively with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (Confédérationan International des Syndicats Chrétiens—CISC), and the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Data are lacking on the membership of these branches.

Currency and Banking

The Franc CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) is the unit of currency. This has the value of 0.002 French francs or 0.0036 dollars. The Institute d'Emission des Départements d'Outre-Mer has the right to issue bank notes. The Caisse Centrale de Cooperation Economique, however, is referred to as the Central Bank. Two French commercial banks cover the island. Both of them carry out complete commercial banking operations, including collection services. They are the Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, in Saint-Denis, with branches in Saint-André, Saint-Pierre, le Port de la Pointe-des-Galets, and offices in Saint-Louis and Saint-Paul; and the Banque de la Réunion, also in Saint-Denis, and with branches in Saint-André, Saint-Pierre, le Port de la Pointe-des-Galets, and offices in Saint-Leu, Saint-Louis, Saint-Paul, Saint-Joseph, and Le Tampon. Two other banks also do business in Réunion, the Caisse d'Epargne et de Prévoyance, and the Caisse Régionale de Crédit Agricole Mutuel de la Réunion. There are more than twenty major European insurance companies represented in Saint-Denis.

Public Finance

The budgeted expenditures of Réunion in 1968 were reported to be in balance with revenues at approximately the equivalent of $50 million. This was nearly double the comparable figure of $29 million reported in 1960.

The tax system of Réunion is basically the same as that of metropolitan France. In recent years, it has been liberalized considerably. The minimum income level subject to taxation has been raised, and other features have been designed to encourage investment and new business. The latter include: eight year taxation exemptions to those undertaking new businesses or new activities; and, ten year tax exemptions granted for a ten year period on land being newly cultivated.

The French government's program of granting aid to all overseas departments has undertaken special projects to accelerate economic and social development. For example, a land reform program was initiated in 1961 to redistribute land to landless farmers. Technical assistance is provided to farmers by government agencies and cooperative societies. The French government aid authority, Investment Fund for the Overseas Departments (Fonds d'Investissement des Départements d'Outre-Mer—FIDOM), alloted a total of $40.9 million to Réunion between 1946 and 1959. Of this total, $17.3 million was for basic economic institutions such as the road system, and $10.9 million for development of agriculture and industry. $12.7 million was made available for social projects. In recent years, amounts made available were considerably larger. In 1969 alone, for example, about $8 million was provided by FIDOM.

Domestic Trade

Domestic trade is largely supplementary to or an extension of foreign trade. Imported and domestic foods join with imported and domestic industrial products in the local trade network, and the heavy excess of imports over exports reflects the degree to which domestic trade is a continuation of the movement of goods brought in from abroad.

Foreign Trade

From 1966 through 1968 imports exceeded exports by a large margin (see table 6). The composition of principal exports in 1968 was: sugar, 78.6 percent; rum, 12.6 percent; and perfume essences, 4.5 percent. Principal imports in 1968 were chemical and petrochemical products, transport materials, and machinery and equipment; the principal supplier was France (see table 7).

Table 6. Value of Exports and Imports in Réunion, 1966, 1967, and 1968
(in millions of U.S. dollars)

	Exports	Imports	Balance
1966	34.74	92.88	—58.14
1967	32.40	103.32	—70.92
1968	41.04	111.96	—70.92

Source: Adapted from *La Zone franc en 1968*. Secrétariat du Comité monétaire de la Zone franc. Paris, Imprimerie nationale, n.d.

Table 7. Imports of Réunion and Their Suppliers, 1968

	Value*	Percent
Imports		
Chemical and petrochemical products	11.52	10.3
Transport materials	11.34	10.1
Machinery and equipment	10.656	9.5
Textiles	9.576	8.6
Metals	7.794	7.0
Rice	6.318	5.6
Meat, fish	5.58	5.0
Milk products	4.068	3.6
Wines and beverages	3.744	3.3
Petroleum products	3.024	2.7
Wood products	2.808	2.5
Furniture	2.520	2.3
Cement	2.60	1.9
Vegetable oils	1.656	1.5
Tobacco	1.458	1.3
Corn	1.332	1.2
Miscellaneous	26.388	23.6
Total	111.94	100.0
Principal Supplier		
France	73.656	65.8
Madagascar	14.256	12.7
Italy	4.122	3.7
Republic of South Africa	2.556	2.3
West Germany	2.088	1.9

* In millions of U.S. dollars.

Source: Adapted from *La Zone franc en 1968*. Secrétariat du Comité monétaire de la Zone franc. Paris, Imprimerie nationale, n.d.

The deficit in the foreign trade balance is made up by such "invisibles" as loans and investments in Réunion, income on investment account, tourism and grants-in-aid from France. These grants-in-aid are not, strictly speaking, part of foreign economic relations because Réunion is a Department of France administratively. Loans and investments make possible the deficits, but little is reported about them. Of more interest is tourism, which is a source of revenue for many island economies. For Réunion, however, in spite of its being a beautiful island with a warm climate, the tourist industry is relatively underdeveloped. The relatively high income levels prevailing on Réunion in contrast to other islands may be a factor inhibiting such development. But air and ship facilities appear to be adequate, and it is likely that more stress on this industry as a foreign exchange earner will be noticed in the future.

SECURITY

Réunion's internal defense is provided by the same police forces that protect metropolitan French departments. External defense is provided by French units in the Indian Ocean area and ultimately by military power from the main forces deployed in France.

As of July 1, 1970 small numbers of French troops were stationed in the Indian Ocean and Pacific territories. An additional 4,400 troops of all services, including army regiments, were stationed in the Territory of the Afars and Issas (formerly French Somaliland). Two thousand military personnel were located in the Malagasy Republic. These included 1,250 in four army companies, 450 navy personnel with one frigate and two minesweepers, and 300 men in the air force. The air force had twelve ground-support aircraft and six medium transports. The naval units are based at Diégo-Suarez on the northern tip of Madagascar.

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CHAPTER 5. REUNION

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GLOSSARY

AYFR—The Autonomist Youth Front of Réunion.

BIOT—British Indian Ocean Territory [see ch. 3, *Seychelles and the British Indian Ocean Territory*].

CFA—Communauté Financière Africaine [French African financial community].

cirque—A mountain valley shaped like an amphitheater.

coir—Coconut husk fiber prepared for making rope or matting.

copra—Dried coconut meat.

Creole—A term applied variously to [1] a person of European ancestry born in a colony or former colony; [2] a person of mixed African and European ancestry; [3] a language formed by a local mixture of French and one or more African languages.

FAO—Food and Agriculture Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations.

FIDOM—Fonds d'Investissement des Départements d'Outre-Mer [Investment Fund for the Overseas Departments].

IFB—Independent Forward Bloc [of Mauritius].

IPPF—The International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Majlis—The legislative body in the Republic of Maldives.

Mascarene Islands—A collective term for the geographical group of islands comprising Réunion, Mauritius, and Rodrigues.

MCA—Muslim Committee of Action [of Mauritius].

MFPA—The Mauritius Family Planning Association.

MLP—The Mauritius Labour Party, headed by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

MMM—Militant Mauritian Movement.

NLFR—The National Liberation Front of Réunion.

OAU—Organization of African Unity.

OCAMM—Organisation Communauté des Etats africaine, Malgache, et Mauritius [Community Organization of African and Malagasy States and Mauritius].

PCR—Parti Communiste Réunionnais [Réunion Communist Party].

PMSD—Parti Mauricien Social Democrate [the Mauritian Social Democratic Party].

qadi—A Moslem judge.

Qur'an—The Koran; the sacred text of Islam.

RGCL—The Réunion General Confederation of Labor.

SDP—The Seychelles Democratic Party, the majority party in the Legislative Assembly.

Shari'ah—Islamic law.

SPUP—The Seychelles People's United Party, the minority party in the Legislative Assembly.

WHO—World Health Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations.

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